

TO THE READER

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POEMS, 1930-1940

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POEMS

1930-1940

by

EDMUND BLUNDEN

'For thou exist'st on many a thousand grains
That issue out of dust'

Measure for Measure

LONDON
MACMILLAN & CO. LTD
1940

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Gratefully dedicated

to

H. W. GARROD

A MASTER OF CRITICAL ENCOURAGEMENT

PREFACE

AT the generous invitation of my publisher, I bring together most of the poetical pieces which I have written since the appearance, under the imprint of Messrs. Cobden-Sanderson, of *Poems*, 1914-1930. During these ten years, the following volumes of verse from my pen have been published: *Halfway House*, 1932; *Choice or Chance*, 1934; and *An Elegy, and other Poems*, 1937. There was also printed for private circulation, by the Corvinus Press, a small miscellany called *On Several Occasions*.

It is naturally from these items that the present is chiefly compiled, with some omissions, and some supplements from other and less accessible sources; and besides, here are a number of pieces from periodicals or from manuscript — attempts, I cannot conceal, of a mind usually taxed with very different affairs, to avoid estrangement from a way of life beloved since childhood.

‘There is not any severing of our loves.’

It may happen that readers will discern in the substance of these expressions, here and there, some apparent inconsistency: on which, I would recall the admonitions of Mr. Thomas Hardy, disclaiming any attempt to deliver an elaborated philosophy through the separate productions (in many instances) of varying impulse and circumstance. And, if I may further employ the statements of that great man in respect of collections of verse, I should like to say that many of the pieces were written not as elements of an autobiography but in the spirit of

projection and daydream, and refer neither to myself nor other people as individuals.

One or two things about certain pieces may be mentioned. 'A Summer's Fancy' was written in 1922 in the 'spare cabin, port' of s.s. *Trefusis*, a cargo ship bound for Bahia Blanca: and has subsequently been revised. The stanzas entitled 'Exorcized' were composed at the request of my old friend the present editor of *The Times Literary Supplement* on the occasion of the München conference, the good effects of which were so soon and so deliberately destroyed; but I could not foresee that mischief when I wrote the verses, and many of my friends who may afterwards have changed their minds were for the moment pleased with what I said. The name of the forgotten poet at page 145 was Mary Leapor, a most attractive young writer of the eighteenth century, and regarded as a prodigy because she was also the daughter of a gardener.

Some of these writings are concerned with the war of 1914-1918 and its after-refrains. It is not a case of morbidly wishing to go back that road, or of want of anxious interest in current events; but those who saw that tremendous time will know that it does not easily give up its hold.

The appearance of a poetry-book under the present calamitous cloud of war is not what any author would have wished: but should anything here offer either relief at present or theme for the future, or any pleasure or brightness, I should be fortunate.

E. B.

OXFORD
April 1940

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HALFWAY HOUSE



A SUMMER'S FANCY

A SUMMER'S FANCY

THE time and place agree ; each leaf has grown
A spirit, claiming one of life's kind hours ;
The slow weir water has that undertone,
The willow-wood exerts her elfin powers.
Here muse with me, breathe, live the life of flowers
For once, if fate said once : here let us find
Ourselves adance with wandering dream, as flowers are
with the wind.

Is age not beautiful ? How many years
Have fashioned this my valley, which I yearned
To haunt anew, — and came at last with tears,
And in clear light, made mute by joy, returned !
More beauty even than I before discerned
Dwells in this country, since my dear has sighed
Astonishment in gladness at the grace here signified.

Here, in the circle of these giants green,
The sward lies softly yet, the men and boys
Come after work to drive their wickets in —
My father and grandfather shared those joys ;
The Psalmist bade them make a cheerful noise.
And even a game is an immortal thing ;
Memory's forgotten when boys first played cricket on
this ring.

Still, drifting groups of cows in glossy red
And creamy white wake summer's fancy here ;
On chestnut roots the cowboy rests his head
Or dabbles in the shallows past the weir ;

The herds drift through their sun-lagoon each year
As sure as boys to idle boys succeed —
How will you know the year by those ? What says the
rock or reed ?

Over such tardy centuries from his knoll
The church tower ever gazes change to shame
Until blue heaven shrink like a burning scroll ;
The bridge with his sharp arches means the same,
' Let no change come ' ; the heart allows his claim.
The summer paradise which now we view
Was paradise when Christian church, when Tudor bridge
were new.

I was a reed that whispered here, a stone
To make the water talk ; these sunny leas
Were my wide world ; and is that spell clean gone
When I was natural here as those brown bees,
When nymph-songs echoed on the blossom breeze,
And my first friend and I could call one day
Adventurous eternity with wandering by the way ?

Him we have seen ; seeking, I found more light,
Assured how life has blessed his patient worth
With the fair bride so spirit-free and bright
And yet true daughter of this homely earth.
So smilingly sits peace beside their hearth,
It is as sweet a tale as I have scanned,
It seems the intended song of all the muses of this land.

For as you know, he was my earliest friend ;
An unambitious and a glorious name.

And though asunder our late journeys tend,
They will rejoin ; they were one and the same.
Unless he played, the zest went from the game.
At setting out, the path and pilgrim too
Are fresh ; they fall in love ; so he stands in my life's
review.

Now as I ken these levels greenly glowing,
Whose hissing grassy revels drowse our ear,
These clouds about high heaven lazily going,
This drizzling runnel silvering down the weir,
I in my former union reappear,
With him again on sunshine holidays,
And our proud seasons with a music pass before my gaze.

Young Spring, O help us be as we were then ;
Where wakens wonder more than in the feel
Of breast-warm eggs, of greenchub or wise wren,
And nest smoother than silk ? what hand could steal
Those tiny cradles where the angels kneel ?
We let the leaves enfold them, and went on,
And locked our secret up and knew when any nest was
gone.

Spring's primrose said good-bye to thick-grown
brakes, —
Then summer built us houses in the hay.
Summer could triumph over danger's lakes,
By high suns dwindled into creviced clay.
Chin-deep in brooks we danced summer away
Under the bowing willows and would run
Naked as Hottentots and rouse the mild cows in the sun.

Thence, with slow work, sleep of September fell,
Shrill cockerels made it autumn hour by hour,
Bonfires were come, and acorns dropped in the dell,
The clear noon called to climb the belfry tower
By the dark stairs and spy out, shine or shower,
Hop-lands in blue smoke wreathed, and close below
Peaked awkward roofs, and yards and cotes where we
dared never go.

One day comes winter blowing on his nails,
Leading long jingling teams from black-barned farms ;
Down died the icy sun in unknown vales,
But several met to mock his red alarms —
The moon, the skaters, and the pollards' arms !
Quick as the apple's taste, and golden-clear
As willow-leaves came Christmas and the best bells of
the year.

Sometimes another gave us company,
If gentler pastime pleased her ; long we praised
Nell's happy skill of quiet sympathy
That said she chose us while her blue eyes gazed
On each discovery that our spirits raised :
And I remember when their love began —
The posy-rhymes she sent him, that in roses, violets,
ran.

The joy that childhood sweethearts tremble to,
The shy looks telling love that has no guile !
As in a primrose rests the happy dew,
So his look shone content in her new smile ;
That peeped as fearless and as shy meanwhile

As ever primrose shining silently,
Where winds come not, and free they bloom, and speak
innocency.

But none the less I was the partner still
Of all his happy hours and he of mine ;
The later love's arising comes to chill
Much elder kindness into hurt decline,
Fidelity is left to peak and pine
While splendid passion wins the soul's last pains —
Child love knows no such argument, nor brings the golden
chains.

You see the hawthorn whose gray hornéd boughs
Make a rude dome ; beneath, the sheltering ewes
Have beaten a bare floor ; there we would house,
Our wealth being blackhearts cold with orchard dew
And diamond plums in turn ; we told our news,
Which she would sometimes answer with her rhymes,
Till all the buttercups were gold that purchased fairy-
times.

But should I count my memory's jewels all ?
You have their kindred in your heart as well,
You see the very homes of my recall,
May know the two friends and shy-smiling Nell.
You see, for so in your first hopes it fell,
Time all too soon, swift time that masqued so slow,
Dimming the crystal light and pointing roads that we
must go.

So now our schoolbooks, that had been till now
Companions almost welcome as our play,

Assumed the tyrant : burdened the pale brow,
As learning droned all through the anxious day
And in the evening robbed our sports away.

We trudged together through that harder hour,
Hoping at last to gain the height, to see as from a tower.

Truly our hearts drooped by the way, to hear
The din of luckier playmates homeward bound
While we were sitting in our torment there,
And dimly pondering over much new-found
Abracadabra ; and black-capped and gowned
The sour-tongued master stared and hovered nigh —
A surly good old man with whom true fire and faith
would die.

These bonds with use became no bonds at all,
The dark enigmas vanished one by one.
And leisure grew as sweet as it was small :
In learning's honour we gave place to none.
Where old mates shivered with a shotless gun
A-scaring crows, or led the haywain's team,
We travelled past, our heads awl with learning's rain-
bow gleam.

Pleasure of pleasures, then how grandly rung
The winter storm first read from Thomson's pen ;
And in enchanted hour for us he sung
His drowsy castle in the wizard's glen.
We read and knew ; we said the lines again
When the wind sobbed through slatting trees, and skies
Hurled their dun rains ; we saw his dream in June's white
woolpacks rise.

So journeying and so following graver thought,
We seemed to part from what had been before,
Setting our punier ecstasies at naught
And towards our elders turning more and more.
What triumph might not manhood have in store ?
Even his Nell awhile seemed as bygone
As hoops and tops and every toy that once was doted
on.

She, wondering first with no smile on her lips
That he no longer ran with her a-maying
And their late meeting joy was in eclipse,
Soon knew his mind, his innocent delaying,
And with her own friends was contented playing ;
Made no vain cry upon his solitude.
Days grew to months and months were years before the
rest renewed.

Moon-like she gathered grace ; she was an elf
Well-beloved long for being so charming-young —
And she grew one praised for her blossoming self
Whose promise was a theme for many a tongue :
And all she did, sewed, 'broidered, danced or sung
Was by good people marked with honeyed phrases,
And well her rounded rosy cheeks agreed with all their
praises.

Many were fair, that one the fair of many,
At flower-show-day, a day that stood as proud
In even a scholar's calendar as any :
Many the young girls were among the crowd,
Petalled in white like spirits from a cloud,

To sweethearts bolder wooing bolder glancing
When the day's music burst abroad and the hobby-horse
was dancing.

On such a day one year, my friend and I
Were reconnoitring the field's gaudy plan,
Debating what to visit by and by,
King of the Ring, or Europe's thinnest man —
After the roundabouts' grand clang began, —
When through the gate came Nell and with her came
Her cousin Will from Parham Green, vain as a stack
afame.

' This needs no words ; the day is ours,' said I,
And he put out the matter from his mind,
For the brass gala bawled at the rich sky
And blaring organs lured the half-inclined,
And swingboats soared, and ochred zanies whined
From stalls where vases gilt with mermaids glinted,
And giant heads showed clay-pipe grinders waiting to be
splintered.

Here spectral folks, who'd never been in trains,
Paused nodding through the gardeners' marquee ;
Tapping of shoulders hailed young fellows' pains,
Whose labels claimed egg-plum or picotee.
Among them crushed small bodies that would see
Their penmanship evoke some word of praise
Or picture worked in yellow silks hold granny's partial
gaze.

Then to the waggon-rail Squire stooped ringed hands,
And with some sheepish prelude got by heart,

Disgorged the prizes : then, hey ! for the stands,
The tumbling skittles, and the jabbing dart.
Oaks sighed for evening, still noised folly's mart.
Her fierce lamps flared, her trumpet-blasts buzzed
high,
Feigned shrieks, toy guns and rattles clashed, and the
glare lit up the sky.

That even turned into music as we went
Home by the bridge and falling brook's sweet smell ;
In his half-silence I could read the event ;
And the next Sunday, saw my friend and Nell
Meet by the church door at the minute bell,
And after from the trooping congregation
Hastening across the stiles in serious talk and meditation.

Thenceforth in his bright speed and carelessness
He told the stones or grass he trod to hear,
' I love my love : my love loves me no less,
Speed on, old Clock, and bring me to my dear ' ;
When larks up leapt with silver leer-a-leer,
Would toss his cap up, answering their acclaim :
And in Nell's bluebell eye now lovely gleams and twink-
lings came.

That tale of magic, written in their looks,
And in their hearts, never in words revealed,
We might seek still in the many vantage-nooks
That nature sets about the wooing weald,
Green nooks where beauty pillows her, concealed
From light-come, light-gone eyes, and beckoning clear
Through casements of embosoming leaves to those with
hearts for her.

They stole away ; the evening star has seen,
Doubt not, their love-watch at the resting mill,
Where mated swans rowed over waters green
And sunset throned young birches on the hill.
They stole away, and heard the windgod trill
Winging the corn that to the bright west rolled
A newfoundland ! on whose far bourn brown oaks were
 branched with gold.

And how the calm vast presence of delight
Moved by them in the love-seen earth and air
And how their hearts knew love the infinite,
And loved as in a vision — we, my fair,
Need no conjecturing similes to share.
With them their secret lies, and we have known
Its likeness, nay, all true love makes the eternal ray its
 own.

Thus he and Nell, thus boy and girl, are met,
But slave-like slog the weights and wheels and sands
Of one who never brought a gladness yet
But with it thrust another from our hands.
There on our path resplendent Mercury stands
In smiles ; to that new saviour hasten on !
We meet, then turn for him who was our guide. That
 guide is gone.

Schooldays were ended now for us, the last
Morning sped on to its dismissing bell ;
Our treasures to the younger went broadcast,
And before all the master bade farewell.
To little boys it seemed two giants fell,

So long our reign had been ; noon tolled ; and then
Out of the empty room we crept to number us with men.

To number us with men ! a proud, a sad,
A lonely thought that paled us, in review
Of all the health and freedom ever had,
And laughters from all sides while play came new.
What sterner porch was this that we went to,
Where few were mates, where serious was the jest,
And all in straitened channels moped and hard care killed
the best ?

Such shadows of young hearts, short-lived as those
Which smite the leaping sunshine of the spring,
Fly on a thought, the blue revives and glows,
The golden greens enkindle and skylarks sing ;
And these our doubts of life on broken wing
Passed, and we felt awhile our heaven as blue,
Our sun as warm, our songs as gay as those before we
knew.

Well-chanced it is for those who gently go
Into man's wars, with veterans left and right
To shield their errors, that had worked them woe
If fate had slung them straight to the bayonet-fight.
Sweet luck was ours that kept us first in sight
Of home and that gray steeple year by year,
Nor drove us into distant streets where wisdom's bought
so dear.

With quiet labour come to evening bell,
With sinewed health enjoying hours of ease,

We learned and ripened, listened and marked well,
And by these tokens pleased whom we would please ;
Found life no fury, duty no disease,
Nor less the warming praise that we might win.
But still a sigh of discontent would sometimes well
within.

Even through our triumphs in their simple kind
When fortune, as we deemed, had made us strong,
A twilight trouble whispered in the wind,
Unreasoned melancholy thinned the song ;
Days that were long had once smiled twice as long,
And for my part I made no hazard why,
Yet surely read an Ichabod already in the sky.

We sat among the jovial cricketers
In the horsed brake that drove up hill, down dale,
Leaving our crestfallen competitors
To alchemize defeat with nut-brown ale ;
Loud roared our laughter on the scarce-told tale,
Stiff labourers lifted up their husky jaws
To give ' The Old Arm Chair,' and all the Trojans roared
applause.

On went the wheels, the din aroused the owls
From meadow oaks immantled with brown shade ;
The wheelwright spoke : ' There's none played
Tommy's bowls '
And ' You young stonewall ' (this to me) ' You
played
As pretty as a master of the trade.'

Pleased beyond measure we presaged renown
Where from the wooded climb the road came out upon
the down.

Terrible that beauty : groves crouched in the deep
Of valley-mist ; alone, uncertain shone
The stilly river in his miles of sleep,
And signals glowed where murmuring trains were
gone ;
Beyond, the coppiced loneliness rose on
To fringe with purlieus the black domes and spires
On a deep blue where voiceless lightning played in pallid
fires.

From this great valley of so many farms
Came any voice but some few sleepy cries ?
Sleep held the valley in her ancient arms ;
Even deeper sleep had closed what enterprise
Of youth and age ! and hid from fame's weak eyes
The names and faces of what conquering men !
Out of the valley drearily came that sad sense on us then.

And there was dumb mad travailing afar,
The ecstasy of mysteries that flew
A second's flight, with augury of war
In heaven, a shadow-show of terrors due !
Watching this wild work all the roistering grew
Silent ; and some from a slack hand let fall
The new-got flowers of praise to strew vanity's funeral.

Why such remembrance, say you ? why do you dwell
On a brief mood ? — It lasted long with me.

My friend had peace and refuge in his Nell,
But I had none to bear my lethargy,
No lamp, no voice to make the phantoms flee.
And he, he had his Nell ; my mood alone
Found a grave Preacher by a pool or on a churchyard stone.

From the lit prospect more and more I turned,
And knew no answer in a summer's day ;
Already was the false-famed phoenix burned,
The rainbow seraph found in death's stiff clay !
Wintry the elegies the spring will play,
Errors of ecstasy, for an April hour :
Again the eaves make moan and pools are saddened with
the shower.

Now the day comes that drives me from the fold
Of this my village, parts me from my friend ;
Now with the new at hand I see the old
In its true beauty, now I comprehend
How much I loved this life, come to an end.
It was a day that drew as suddenly near
As drifting boats are tugged at last down to the glutting
weir.

I took farewell of folks I knew, and went
To take farewell of streets and streams and lanes
Where early joy had trilled, nor well content
Found no hours left to look on further plains,
Our ponds, our finger-posts, our kilns, our vanes
All speaking of the laughing vanished time —
But now the church clock tolled me on and grange bell's
careless chime.

The day was heavy, and the autumn near
In stillness and in shade cloaked his advance,
The water gleamed not on the blackened weir,
The aspens drooped forgetful of their dance.
Rooks half-asleep cawed, lighted as by chance
Beside the creviced path my friend and Nell
And I were on, across these leas, lengthening that farewell.

And all the way I thought old pleasures strove
To speak themselves, but there was nothing clear ;
The mind's eye, misty with the tears of love
Parted, was conscious of them thronging here,
But no distinct voice rung in fancy's ear.

The barren journey hastened by this Ring,
' Past, lost ! ' the thin vague voices of the sluices seemed
to sing.

So all too soon, the chiefest left unsaid,
Chilled by the day, they saw me in the train.
Then was the bloom of spring's amazement shed,
No more green twilights in the ferny lane,
Gathering roses dropt with new-fallen rain
To greet a child alliance happy-hearted.
How bright old flowertides shone ! and I was from their
coast departed.

Gently the swollen cloud is floated on,
The true heaven glitters there in sweet surprise,
We look, and now the thunder-shroud is gone,
Far phalanx wings are thridding open skies.
Out of remorse I saw resolve arise.

The day of my migration, my soul's dear,
Well may be marked a happy day in a most happy year.

In lonely envy for a thought's brief spell
I had looked upon my friend, whose lot was cast
With the deep trusting meeting love of Nell,
And in these dearest fields from first to last
If so he would ; and while I gleaned the past
You like the gleaner Ruth stood in my way
And turned my stubble-fields to gold for ever and a day.

Sometimes came letters from my friend, who told
Of harvest, feast and fair, of ancient men
Dismounted, headstoned, farm and business sold,
Some lovers wed, some lost to love again ;
And, chance, his pleasant Nell would take the pen
And bid me still be ready, and to come
A longed-for guest when our old church would make
them bride and groom.

Through the four seasons of these happy isles
And lands beyond the changeless changing seas
Myriads like those were walking then all smiles,
Whispering their vows below moon-haunted trees,
Listening the sureness echoing over the leas
Of holy bells soon to be set a-ringing
For very brooks to chime and hills and vales break into
singing.

What cloud is this amazing the good year ?
There was a speck on the horizon's bloom
Scarce seen, an hour ago. Now huge, now drear,
Now blasting reason, hangs the vulture gloom,
And maniac wailings of immense simoom
Are pouring through the universe. Arise !
The fury of the tempest War is on you. — The red dies

From cheek and lip new-vowed to love and life,
While the world plunges, and the world's youth
goes

To meet what may be ; in the roar of strife
Dreamed marriage bells are still, and no priest knows
If ever to be heard above earth's throes.

Then the blood flows again, the mastering mind
Burns steady in the lover marching, the lone love left
behind.

For us, the parting under those storm-skies
Was such, and at my last yearned look of you
You would not weep, as though war's cunning eyes
Would leer to see love's tear ; you lived it through.
But as the train from the darkened platform drew
Seeing you swooning to your mother's breast
I knew what love was, and was sure that man is to be
blest.

But to my friend again. He too was gone
From love's possessing into that close haze
Of Flanders whence the voice of guns roared on
To hold love breathless and make years of days ;
Month after month dragged by ; his destined ways
Though neighbouring mine, not for a moment
crossed,
Month after month we lived astonished through the
holocaust.

Then the two friends a moment come together,
Strange luck, together, in the weary gloom
Of endless battle set to scowling weather,

Of death-in-life and unescapable doom.
As I sat drinking in an inn's thronged room
Muffled in late disaster's lingering mood,
A voice beside me shook me, there my old companion
stood.

And then what crowded talking of the past
And with swift-flashing hope, of you, of Nell,
Of life's rewards since we had written last ! —
But from such jubilant chords the song soon fell
As all our trail of terrors came to tell.
The walls about us jarred, our aching bones
Jarred to the lean long guns dragged gnashing over the
skull-like stones.

Gun after gun, wheel after crawling wheel,
Trooped on through that ancestral rustic town,
The pale sun like a coward touched the steel,
Then hid again, again dun rain slid down,
The rocking lorries splashed the white walls brown,
And our glad meeting words, that would have flown
Home sure as weary birds, were worse moiled in war's
monotone.

Before us both his deadly landscape spread,
The maimed land would not let us look elsewhere,
The half-shut eyes of a sweet country dead
Froze the mind's deeps with unforgettable stare.
The drumming din so barraged our career,
Old voices but an idiot twittering seemed.
War only was ; and we were war's ; and all the rest
was dreamed.

So swift the precious hour was lost while we
Called up the nightmare landmarks of the line,
The saps, the keeps, the raid's curt misery,
The roaring toppling fountain of the mine,
And miracles of crucifix or shrine
That like ourselves had lingered on — but, sure,
All these and all must fall at last to the endless flail of war.

'Miracles never happen,' said my friend,
And 'They may happen, and they do,' said I,
'But we shall need some few before the end ;
The first seven years —,' and so we put this by
And from our wine borrowed a brighter sky,
Going out thence towards the thunderous east,
Between the lines of Flemish signs and windows trinket-
drest.

I to my camp and he to his diverged
Where wild shells snouting up the harmless loam
Were wailing over and shouting drivers urged
Their well-loved mules ahead. — 'To all at home !'
Between ourselves and home, what leagues to come
Of calculated death in hell-fire mangling,
Of sloughs, of sleepless pangs, of Golgothas, of spirit-
strangling.

There's the great château, that gray hump of stones,
And here's the church, these craters of red sludge ;
His uniform hangs loose about his bones !
How scarlet's his gaped mouth ! his eyes, gray
smudge —
The frost has kept him well. See how they drudge,

A Company, poor old Sergeant Bell's a-weeping,
For half of One Platoon left in the smashed redoubt —
they're sleeping !

Two hit,—they've surely spotted the relief ;
The five-nines drop like hail, my hot scalp creeps, —
God, man, we're going out ; we'll get there — if !
Down in the trench ! The pouncing shrapnel sweeps
Past the bowed shoulders, fuse-caps whack the heaps
Beside, while they fight with the lapping slime,
In tears and curses towards their rest, and return in two
days' time.

No, I'll no more of that ; let that remain
Where it can never fade, being branded there
In my deep agonies ;— my selfish vein
Would have it haunt those whom I hold most dear !
Forgive me that, pretend to smile, say clear,
Miracles are no legends nor decoys
Contrived in simpler days to witch the world to faith's
employs.

For there's a wonder, that from the weary wild
Men came alive to find some first hopes crowned :
Pelion on Ossa had been easier piled
Than flesh and blood got through that woeful ground.
And happiness redoubles, that we found
My friend who thought me left in Flanders clay,
Married to Nell, and all their life promising to be May.

Their bond takes form, they will not fail, but grow
In the serenity of this rich vale,

With folks about them yet who used to show
Kindness in early days, now aged and hale :
Round the bright hearth their children will regale
Their pretty minds as with a twinkling eye
Their father tells the Homeric tales of our first liberty.

And in the round of labour and love-cheer,
There should be feasts and blithe conventicles,
The grand occasions of the rural year,
Lamb-fairs, clubs, dances, church's festivals,
And there the nation's far-heard chronicles
Will with a quiet mind be heard and weighed ;
There life will be : God feared, the King honoured, the
Law obeyed.

The cottage where those two friends live must long
Enchant the wanderer's envying eye, and ours,
And from their damson trees the blackcap's song
Will vie with the anthem of their crowding flowers ;
Husbandry's glass will measure out their hours,
And every honest mind that sees their home
Will go his way refreshed with such riches in little
room.

So may it prove ! So may the nymphs that haunt
These iris'd waters, or these colonnades
Of lullabying trees, make them their chant
To the budding hearts of future youths and maids
Who shall be walking in their suns and shades ;
And they shall hear, unguessing whence or how,
Sweet gusts of inward song, old fame, and wreath glad
vow with vow.

Over the green the hour is tolling sweet,
The hammers clink in the forge, the children run
From school with shrill delight down sleepy street :
There where the last wall's pear-tree takes the sun
See the red bonnets and blue caps come on.
The wide lea surely gleams more as they pass,
And it is earth-born joy that's whispering through the
tall white grass.

That hour-bell rings to tell me, I must leave
Once more the world that housed me homely of old,
But this day's parting shall not make me grieve,
Love's joy increases joy a hundredfold.
For one flower withered, look, what hosts unfold !
May I then part contented at dewfall
Having one theme that passes this, if you will tune it all.

TO THEMIS :
SKETCHES OF TRIALS

THESE
SKETCHES
WAS
RECEIVED
JAN 10 1891

MR. CHARLES DEFENDS HIMSELF

Or, the Days of the Five-Mile Act

‘ TRUE, cousin ; shaken times like these deny
To more than one or two, a scattered few,
Clergy or laity, to live and die
With sunny peace and Paradise in view ;
But that old man whose passing-bell now tolled
Has triumphed, and deserved the streets of gold.

‘ What were his sufferings ? In the event, not great,
As things go since, but in this town we know
How Samuel Charles laughed in the face of fate
And set us laughing too some years ago.
Come, this is sweet Virginia ; and your glass ;
And hear the story, how he held the pass.

‘ It was in ’82 ; and, late elected,
The Earl of Plymouth comes to rule our town ;
Dissenters being among us well respected,
Our new *tyrannus* swears to cut them down ;
And with a kind of theologic barter
Announces : “ No Dissenters, or no Charter.”

‘ The Mayor and Council, bit with this condition,
Preferred this world’s advantage — all but one
Whose age (needing divine more than physician)
Made him demur : “ Sir, here in Hull are none
More peaceful, pious, loyal than the sect
On whom you meditate this harsh effect.

‘ “ Do’t too you may ; but I am an old man
And to another country bound ; adieu.”

The obsequious remnant readily began,
And of the citizens had eyes on two
For their most serviceable prompt oblations,
The shepherds of our largest congregations.

‘ Ashley, by angel or by mortal warned,
Before their officers could apprehend him,
Was out of town ; that shrift the other scorned.
They had a stony cell that night to lend him,
Whence haled next day before the magistrates,
Acute and bold our preacher thus debates :

“ “ Your pleasure, gentlemen ? I come before you,
Obedient to your warrant ; here’s advice : —
Imprisoning Ministers of God, assure you,
Is Devil’s work, paid at the Devil’s price,
Who, in such instances, pays with a smile.”
“ Come, Mr. Charles, we thought another style

“ “ Of greeting was — from you — our privilege.”
“ What style of greeting, gentlemen ? ” “ Of peace ;
That is your Gospel, so your listeners pledge.”
“ It is my gospel, but not all my lease ;
I preach the Lord of terrors that must stun
Hard hypocrites and desperate.” — “ You are one.”

“ “ What, one of two, in this ripe city-full ?
No malefactor but two preachers here ?
Not one live drunkard in the gates of Hull ?
None found to break the Sabbath, none to swear ?
Is there no cellar near that might contain
Some growth and taste of the French King’s domain ? ”

' Here the Mayor checks him ; on " You may inform,"
The hearty heretic is led from court,
Anon recalled ; when question waxes warm,
And quick as a gun he answers smart and short :
" Then, do you preach ? " " You know." " And
have you not
A house in Mytton-Gate ? " " You name the spot.

' " But " (so he delves straight to the lurking rage)
" Before you venture, gentlemen, to pass
An ugly sentence, turn your memory's page
To the last Parliament's immortal place ;
Hearken their dying-votes, and Resolution
Condemning, you know what, as persecution.

' " Their words remember : that these penal laws,
Enforced upon dissenting Protestants,
Grieve the King's subject, soothe the Roman cause,
Wound England's, and must foster dissonance."
" A warped recital ! " " No way." " Do you say
To deal by the King's Law is ugly ? " " Pray,

' " Receive this one thing of me, ere you deal
By the King's Law (God bless him, long to live !) :
There have been persons in this Commonweal
Of as great figure in the world (forgive
Seeming aspersion) as Hull streets exhibit,
And yet such dealing brought them to the gibbet."

' " Sedition," roared the Court ; " SEDITION " he,
" And all our chronicles and some law books
And acts of parliament are Sedition's see ;

They ring with it. But now no more thwart looks.
Deal out the law, do not outdeal the Law,
For as it is it whips us preachers raw."

" "Should we outdo it," barks an alderman,
"You are not stopped from seeking remedy."
"Pardon me, but I like a simpler plan,
And that's to avoid diseases." "Answer me :
When, for administering the laws o' the King
Was any hanged ? Never was such a thing."

" "There was. When Harry the Eight first got the
throne,
Empson and Dudley died for that, their deed
Being of the former reign ; and, be it known,
This law for which some lief would see me bleed
Trembles for its own life ; two votes, no more,
Obtained its sway." "This is not sermon-hour."

" "No, but I doubt you need the truth, and one
To tell it you." "We are Protestants, we have them,
Our Church and Ministers are not yet gone."
"Long, long to you may heaven's approval save them.
But here's a matter which should make you muse :
There was, by all report, among the Jews

" "A Church established, and by God's own law ;
Established Ministry. Flown with possession,
They silenced, fettered, murdered some they saw,
A few poor fishermen that had commission
From the Redeemer of the world to rove
About the world and preach a faith of Love.

“ Dear was the error’s cost ; since then we count
The solemn lapse of sixteen hundred years ;
And God yet reckons the unpaid account.”

“ Dear sir,” a student of his Book avers,
“ Not from the apostles’ silence their disaster,
But from the Crucifixion of the Master.”

‘ To this, with easier spirit and even pleasure,
Good Charles replies : “ Their grand offence you name ;
But that did not complete their charge’s measure.
Crippling of preachers was their final blame.”

“ Most learned ; in the Church of England too,
We have men ready with their text as you.”

“ “ Yes, yes ; and some from whose books I’m unworthy
To wipe the dust.” “ The mouth speaks, not the mind.”

“ You are the Town Clerk ? ” “ Ay.” “ And like me
earthy ;

You are not God, I think, to Whom’s confined
The sole prerogative to search a heart.

A Town Clerk once there was who took the part

“ “ Of blessed Paul at Ephesus. ’Twere well
If you had your exemplar’s quality.

But to our business ; let the whole Act tell,
And be it read, by which you deal with me.

Hear all. I pray you, do not bolt me in
With a crooked shard of the Law ; please you, begin.”

“ “ A long act,” sighs Sir Scrutiny, “ rather long,
And dinner’s on.” “ A short act,” ventures one,
Scowled at by several. Clocks now mock, *ding-dong* ;

The Act is read, and still they have not done.
Impatience fidgets all but him they hold,
And he still stands unstirred, acute and bold.

‘ He asks, the informers now be called to the court,
Himself be proved a person meant by the Act.
The waiting dinner cuts the King’s Law short ;
Two moments more, and he’d perhaps been racked.
“ Will you deprive by hearsay nowadays
A man of liberty ? ” They do ; he stays

‘ Six months in prison ; then with zeal the brighter
Among us laboured, and with wit reprov’d
Our reigning vices, to the last a fighter,
Retired yet public, even of enemies loved.
From Mayor to mussel-seller Hull will rue
The knell you heard. But come, the bottle stands with
you.’

THE DEIST

Thomas Woolston, B.D., for a Misdemeanour, 1728–9

‘ TUSKIN my name ; and I am here to say
I bought of the Defendant, at his house
In the Old Jewry, and on the second of May,
This Book, and paid my shilling for the same.’
— So, farewell honest, or dishonest Tuskin.

‘ This Book meanwhile hath brought the Court together,
The King takes action against the learned Author,
Formerly Fellow of Sidney-College, Cambridge,
But he with Faustus-College better marches.

For Thomas Woolston published e'en on May-day
What cannot pass as matter for a May morning,
A Book of wicked weavings blasphemous,
His *Discourse on the Miracles of our Saviour* ;
His learning, thwart and sinister, there spent
On battering holy writ, and representing
Our Lord's clear Miracles as mere rhodomontades,
Reported grossly, absurdly. . . .'

' My voice too

Shall join my justly zealous friend's : This Book
In blasphemy's long almanack
Stands out in most ungodly black.
Our Saviour's made to figure here
As a wizard, cheat and conjurer,
The Gospel as a droll romance,
Moreover, Woolston dares to advance
St. Austin as his master.'

' I

Published the book and won't deny,
Except that all I long to prove
Is the Messiah whom I love,
And for whose honour freed from fancy's train
I long have striven. Can truth be deemed profane ?
For, well examined, many a pious line
Must be abandoned. Take, of many, this :
Christ sent bad spirits into the herd of swine,
Which straight went rushing over a precipice,
And drowned themselves. But, as we further muse,
Whence could that snorting herd appear ? The Jews,
Forbidden swine's-flesh, scarcely spent their means

On fattening bacons. Say the Gadarenes
Had Gentile tastes, yet something deeper now :
My Saviour, yours and mine, would never allow
Those harmless pigs, if pigs there were, to take
Devils aboard and rush into the lake,
Innocent, driven to dreadful death. Therein
Where had his Goodness, Justice, Mercy been ? . . .'

' Familiar with our Saviour, very . . .'
' Makes himself, if none else, merry . . .'
' If he's a Christian, well, I'm not . . .'
' Whether he should be hanged or shot . . .'
' So, Woolston to prison, and I don't much doubt
That once inside he'll never come out ; . . .'

' O may I bear my punishment, great Man,
Candid and friendly Jesus, with some merit
Accordant to your own demeanour ; smile
On this my misdemeanour ; may your plan
At length gain even a little thence ; meanwhile
No chain's so thick that common sense can't wear it.'

AFTER THE 'FORTY-FIVE

THE Southern men, the King's defenders,
Warned of Papists and Pretenders,
Staring to the North,
Mark the chaos of a tempest, shooting nearer and nearer
lightnings forth.
Height on height surrenders.
Rumour multiplies the wrangle of wheels and clash of
hoofs abroad,

Shadow-traitors tens of thousands raid the country,
 swarm the road ;
Which, seen in nearer lineaments, appears a muddy
 mumbling troop,
Five thousand men and not all armed, not one in twenty
 cock-a-hoop ;
At head of whom, with sash of plaid, with white cockade,
 the Colonel rides,
Townley, patterned French, dark-glancing onward as he
 sings and guides.
Colours flying, drums drubbing, boys run miles for the
 raree-show,
Down to Derby guns, swords, staves, pipes, flags and the
 poor five thousand go.
Here from a stable's won a nag, and from that stackyard
 a hog retires,
Sheep and cockerel rue the dawn that lit Rebellion's open
 fires.
And *Liberty and Property* and *Church and King* the school-
 boys read
Along the Regiment's flag aloft — but Liberty must
 lodge, and feed.
So to Derby ; now, who's with us ? hear the music talk
 to You.
' You ' goes skulking out of grasp ; such music will not
 plough or shoe.

Now from the South there's rising storm,
Hark, what steel and lead a-swarm !
See the Jupiter-like arm
 Of Cumberland

Raised, extended, in act to smite ; the skirring Townley
must not stand ;

The ale's drunk down, the blanket's rolled.

The puzzled men and tuneless band
Recede beneath the rushy moor and bony trees, and
reach Carlisle

Where Townley from his Prince receives a new, a dear,
a deadly style.

' Come now, my Trojans, afore this Gate your Com-
mandant requires set out

Chevaux-de-frise — Who fired ? That window ! see, the
smoke still hangs about.

A thicker smoke shall roll for that when Townley hears ;
arrest the hounds.'

Townley, now his pistol's slave, approves the word, and
goes his rounds ;

The sergeant and the corporal in the dark emplacement
close-conferring

Note him ; ' Lost in thought,' ' Or brain,' ' Or ' —
' Quiet, sir ; not a rat stirring.'

For loyalty is still the same

Whether it win or lose the game, —

Or is it mere theatric use of a world that yields no solid
hold ?

Upon the frozen battlement

Goes Townley to the sure event ;

The darkness means to brood no chance of a morning now
with hills of gold.

With silence he accepts the approach and order of the
Crown he hated.

Townley, first in twenty trenches, now in London is much
awaited.

Masterly once in siege and sap, he must conceive another
skill,

Those gray beards have only to assemble, those black
chairs to fill,

And down his rampart drops. He stands with no cockade,
with swordless hands,

As across the moted sunbeam swoop legality's swift-shot
demands.

To him the law essays to open the horrid depth of his
offence,

Opposed to British Constitution, Hanoverian excellence ;
The fear of God not being in him, the Devil's Romish
instigation

Dementing him to attempt subversion, change, enthral-
ment of this free nation,

Seizure of treasure, confederate treason, abstraction of
chattels, defiance of right,

And with pretended colours to darken the sky, and un-
naturally fight.

So these ancient cannons have spoken ; Townley wearily
takes his lance.

'Sirs, I am none of a traitor, I hold my commission from
the King of France.'

Thus, barely exercised and warmed, the Court's com-
pelled to leave the field,

The rebel and his madness taken, fettered, padlocked,
sentence sealed.

And soon the gallows, block and bonfire do their work ;
the crowd admire

Till Townley's heart and those of his faithful remnant
wither in the pyre.
At Kennington he died ; and there one noon when the
friendly thousands came
To watch the innocent siege and assault of South and
North in a summer game,
I think I met him, like as like to dead brave sleepless
youths I knew,
And reading his lip's slight smile I saw his victory won,
his vision true.

INCIDENT IN HYDE PARK, 1803

THE impulses of April, the rain-gems, the rose-cloud,
The frilling of flowers in the westerling love-wind !
And here through the Park come gentlemen riding,
And there through the Park come gentlemen riding,
And behind the glossy horses Newfoundland dogs follow.
Says one dog to the other, ' This park, sir, is mine, sir.'
The reply is not wanting ; hoarse clashing and mouthing
Arouses the masters.
Then Colonel Montgomery, of the Life Guards, dis-
mounts.
' Whose dog is this ? ' The reply is not wanting,
From Captain Macnamara, Royal Navy : ' My dog.'
' Then call your dog off, or by God he'll go sprawling.'
' If my dog goes sprawling, you must knock me down
after.'
' Your name ? ' ' Macnamara, and yours is — ' ' Mont-
gomery.'
' And why, sir, not call your dog off ? ' ' Sir, I chose
Not to do so, no man has dictated to me yet,

And you, I propose, will not change that.' ' This place,
For adjusting disputes, is not proper ' — and the Colonel,
Back to the saddle, continues, ' If your dog
Fights my dog, I warn you, I knock your dog down.
For the rest, you are welcome to know where to find me,
Colonel Montgomery ; and you will of course
Respond with the due information.' ' Be sure of it.'

Now comes the evening, green-twinkling, clear-echoing,
And out to Chalk-farm the Colonel, the Captain,
Each with his group of believers, have driven.

Primrose Hill on an April evening
Even now in a fevered London
Sings a vesper sweet ; but these
Will try another music. Hark !

These are the pistols ; let us test them ; quite perfect.
Montgomery, Macnamara six paces, two faces ;
Montgomery, Macnamara — both speaking together
In nitre and lead, the style is incisive,
Montgomery fallen, Macnamara half-falling,
The surgeon exploring the work of the evening —
And the Newfoundland dogs stretched at home in the
firelight.

The coroner's inquest ; the view of one body ;
And then, pale, supported, appears at Old Bailey
James Macnamara, to whom this arraignment :

You stand charged
That you
With force and arms
Did assault Robert Montgomery,
With a certain pistol

Of the value of ten shillings,
Loaded with powder and a leaden bullet,
Which the gunpowder, feloniously exploded,
Drove into the body of Robert Montgomery,
And gave
One mortal wound ;
Thus you did kill and slay
The said Robert Montgomery.

O heavy imputation ! O dead that yet speaks !
O evening transparency, burst to red thunder !

Speak, Macnamara. He, tremulous as a windflower,
Exactly imparts what had slaughtered the Colonel.
' Insignificant the origin of the fact now before you ;
Defending our dogs, we grew warm ; that was nature ;
That heat of itself had not led to disaster.
From defence to defiance was the leap that destroyed.
At once he would have at my deity, Honour —
" If you are offended you know where to find me."
On one side, I saw the wide mouths of Contempt,
Mouth to mouth working, a thousand vile gunmouths ;
On the other my Honour ; Gentlemen of the Jury,
I am a Captain in the British Navy.'

Then said Lord Hood : ' For Captain Macnamara,
He is a gentleman and so says the Navy.'
Then said Lord Nelson : ' I have known Macnamara
Nine years, a gentleman, beloved in the Navy,
Not to be affronted by any man, true,
Yet as I stand here before God and my country,
Macnamara has never offended, and would not,
Man, woman, child.' Then a spring-tide of admirals,

Almost Neptune in person, proclaim Macnamara
Mild, amiable, cautious, as any in the Navy ;
And Mr. Garrow rises, to state that if need be,
To assert the even temper and peace of his client,
He would call half the Captains in the British Navy.

Now we are shut from the duel that Honour
Must fight with the Law ; no eye can perceive
The fields wherein hundreds of shadowy combats
Must decide between a ghost and a living idolon —
A ghost with his army of the terrors of bloodshed,
A half-ghost with the grand fleet of names that like
 sunrise
Have dazzled the race with their march on the ocean.

Twenty minutes. How say you ?
 Not guilty.

Then from his chair with his surgeon the Captain
Walks home to his dog, his friends' acclamations
Supplying some colour to the pale looks he had,
Less pale than Montgomery's ; and Honour rides on.

THE ATHEIST, 1817

Lord Eldon thinks over Shelley v. Westbrooke

ALMIGHTY Wisdom from whose vouchsafed Law
Derive all ordinances that we apply,
Be ever present to my labours ; bless
Such talent as I have for this high task,
Not unperfected by sustained devotion
And not unrecognized by Britain.

So.

I have before me an unpleasing duty,
A plain one too ; but several ways unpleasing.
What gentleman of Oxford could enjoy
To be the means of what must be affliction
To one who was a member of his College ?
Yet this insurgent youth, whose papers strew
My table, to his College, to my College
Displayed a will most noxious and disloyal ;
Associating us with blasphemy
Which not long since had led to blazing vengeance
And thronged streets shouting satisfaction. He,
Though of good birth, has gapingly drunk in
The nitrous air of that canaille which teems
From lunatic begetting in these days
Of danger, — but, my country, thou shalt hold.

They call this poetry : ‘ Queen Mab ’ — Queen Moon-
shine !

‘ This lanthorn doth the hornéd moon present,’
If I remember Shakespeare ; neither rhyme
Nor reason ; it’s the sickness of the time.
I could forgive the puerile composition,
And after all the young fool is ashamed of it ;
And yet must weigh these arrogant offences
Against revealed religion and the estate
Of holy matrimony.

Love, the sweet convulsion,
Unreined me once to an audacious deed ;
I was a Shelley ! providence preserved me,
Not to be all as this man ; no one word
Did I presume to scrawl on the temple door,

And verse I wrote was innocent of impiety.
' Myra, the whisp'ring gale that ' — let me see.

' Myra, the vernal gale that wakes
The cordial bosom's swell,
Now dallies with, anon forsakes
The cowslip's virgin bell.

In me, fair flow'ret, fear no act
Like that unsanctified ;
Fancy shall be confin'd to fact
When thou art, dear, my bride.'

But time is fleeting ; so good-bye, my verses.
And you, unedifying pamphlet, sleep
A little farther from my speculum.
He married first, a girl who by his phrensies,
And, not least, by these sordid desperate letters
Infected, lies in an unhallowed grave.
Still, in my mind's eye, I envisage youth
With wildness dancing, and the emergent manhood
That leaves caprice behind ; but in this man
What signs of such emancipation show ?
With time, and use, the mulberry leaf turns satin,
Becomes the badge and honour of a — Lord Eldon ;
But this rough leaf with feverish canker glows,
And plagues must be confined. His principles,
Avowed before, stalk still in the light of day ;
What he may suffer, though his looks are for him,
Being past remedy of divine physicians,
Must be passed over ; these unlucky infants
As yet are scatheless of his practices,

And placed in due relation to our Law
Will answer inherited dignity of blood,
And decorate the family, church, and state.

Pagan invasion of our character,
I must resist you ; and with priestly front
Cloister two consciences from prepossession,
From the yet callow nestlings cage away
This quaint bad Pelican whose breast breeds passion ;
Trusting, in this disposal, to have heard
The will of Heaven, with mighty purpose moving
Through man's inept and mutinous injury
To harmony of life and Law !

My carriage.

How, young John ill ? away then, bring me to him.

OCCASION AND MOOD

WINTER STARS

FIERCE in flaming millions, ready to strike they stood,
The stars of unknown will, above our field and wood ;
You who have seen the midnight preparing a dawn of war
May raise imagination to see them ready to roar
Their sparkling death-way down ; and while they waited
the order
Some came flying from nowhere, and launched what
looked like murder,
Rushing beyond our border, and detonating too far
For us to hear. No need to hear. Watching each angry star
I thought our thicket lifted its stack of bayonets
Stiffly against the overthrow of Nature's parapets ;
And marching amain from the highlands came our stream
to see this through ;
Deep and hoarse and gathering force, it swore to die or do ;
Under the intelligence of strange foes, it sang to self and
chance,
Answering all that wildfire with the gleam of its foaming
advance.

THE KISS

I AM for the woods against the world,
But are the woods for me ?
I have sought them sadly anew, fearing
My fate's mutability,
Or that which action and process make
Of former sympathy.

Strange that those should arrive strangers
Who were once entirely at home.

Colonnade, sunny wall and warren,
Islet, osier, foam,
Buds and leaves and selves seemed
Safe to the day of doom.

By-roads following, and this way wondering,
I spy men abroad
In orchards, knarred and woody men
Whose touch is bough and bud ;
Co-arboreal sons of landscape.
Then in the windstript wood

Is the cracking of stems ; and under the thorn
With a kobold's closeness lurks
The wanderer with his knife and rods,
That like a bald rook works ;
His woman-rook about the thicket
Prowls at the hazel-forks.

Sheep lying out by the swollen river
Let the flood roll down
Without so much as a glance ; they know it ;
The hurling seas of brown
Cannot persuade the ferrying moorhen
Her one willow will drown.

This way wondering, I renew
Some sense of common right ;
And through my armour of imposition
Win the Spring's keen light,
Till for the woods against the world
I kiss the aconite.

THE LAST WORD

As in an elegy black Vesper holds
This flowering vale of waters ; wisely folds
For some still hours the differences of place
In broad solemnities of total grace.
The passion, incident and badge of day
Now merge into one monumental gray,
Though still melodious instancy returns
At intervals to tell us what she mourns,
When thus the sun, far ridden in clifts and shadows,
With thrilling signal kindles warm green meadows,
And gives, bright memory, some clear verse of day's
Illustrious chronicle. Once more they blaze,
The sculptured landmarks, the apparelled trees,
Earth's kindest loves, farms, inns and cottages.
These echoes melt, the rose-light changes ; pure
Sounds the dimittis, more profound and sure ;
It is a masterpiece, that proves man just
To speak no word but beauty's over mortal dust.

A SHADOW BY THE BARN

BESIDE his barn the country parson stood,
And eyed the jays in verges of the wood,
And thus addressed me from his antique reign :

' I never ventured far, and it were vain
If I now ventured, into argument
Of God and how He dominates event,
And to what inn He leads time's pilgrims on
And where the souls of those we lose are gone ;
I watch the sky, indeed, and call divine

The hand that makes its million pictures shine,
And feel that every beauty there displayed
Was for responsive human pleasure made.
But from this brink of dangerous speculation
Let me recoil. Some years of observation
Set me on safer ground ; I find God grants
Sky-wisdom better to industrious ants,
And bees, and fowls, and ploughmen. Even I
Have learned what messages link earth and sky.

‘ The white mist from the river floats the lawn
At evening as the prologue to glad dawn
When, all to heaven exhaling with the sun,
A bright and busy day will be begun ;
Yet, on the fifth white evening fear the Lord,
And on the sixth “ a rainy . . . day ” ’s His word.
The clouds breed high in air, in thin white trains ?
These warn of winds just breath’d, and unseen rains ;
And small black clouds that fly beneath a curtain
Of confused cloud make long brown rainstorm certain.

‘ Mark you moreover that in troubled skies
A sea-green hue is greater rain’s disguise ;
A deep blue peeping there brings shine and shower.
Aye, the Sun’s wheel is in our village power.
If like those horns that sprang from Moses’ brow
His effluence show, if shorn of rays he bow
To solemn Night, we read that violence swells.
The wan moon rain, the red moon wind foretells ;
Sweet natural colour again on Phoebe’s cheek
Does to our windows peace and plenty speak.

' We hereabouts, a placid tenantry,
Must have our wits about us constantly,
And charm and benefit arise together
From our recourse to oracles of weather.
How have I loved the loud lamenting gale
That floods the autumn storm through park and pale,
And makes the good ship Life proceed with shortened
sail

Into the winter seas ; I hear that tone,
And love it most when listening all alone.
In truth, though glorious noon delights me, still
Something of sadness pleases more ; the skill
Of imminence, of omen is the best.
I hear this moment my beloved unrest.'

And all about me I perceived his fact.
The swallow along the green low-striking tracked
Invisible fugitives ; my languid dog
Ate the coarse grass, the toad began to drag
His squatness forth, the snorting swine agreed,
But with abrupt lust for cyclonic speed.
And then the rain, and blotted landscape ; whence
I scampered to the waggon-shed's defence,
And looked for my companion's straw-stuck hat
And rusty cassock, and continued chat,
But found no sign ; unless that duskier gray
Of doubled downpour were his ghost at play,
And the fresh tunes of hurrying runlets were
The final notes of my philosopher.

THE ROTUNDA

OUT of the sparkling sea of green that swells and sings to
the summer gale,
With many a nautilus afloat of scarlet poppy or mar-
guerite,
Up like a crystal cave
Above the laughing wave
Arises proud the mansion of the genius none is heard to
hail,
From whose fantastic sight of truth and beauty grew the
scene complete.

His sense was delicate ; that green in glassy pane once
glanced at sea,
That cold gray mentions fog and rock and winter on a
coast I dreamed,
And yet the field and wood
By most are understood
As far inland, the natural home of cattle, buttercup and
bee ;
Here but for him the sun for gardeners, farmers, lovers
alone had beamed.

By him illusion's island rose, and round a fairy ocean
flowed,
The dove's long mourning changed into a bell that tolls
beneath the tide ;
And winged seeds' bright play
Became the pearly spray ;
Here like a riddle lives his presence high above the country
road,
A spirit of wonder in isolation, unacknowledged, satisfied.

SUMMER HIEROGLYPHS

AN enchantment was on that day from the calm first hours
When all along the eastern sky
Appeared marching by,
Among the wingéd dragons guarding the giant flowers,
An ancient dream, royal and wizard Powers,
Who held their brows on high
Above the wondering hills.

Our haunt in the meadow that day beneath the blue
Had sudden meanings, when with a strain
Of music there was a rain
About us of bright orbs delicious, luminous, few ;
A charm, we whispered, a heaven's blessing too.
The grass hid up the talisman
And then farewell the music :

Which still we longed to renew, when gong-like struck
The violent crisis of zone-minds
That chilled us with clouds turned winds.
How reeled that rocky field of war ; yet it was luck
To breathe the passion and glory that now shook
Trees of slow limbs, tough rinds,
To dancing daffodils.

AN ASIDE

Now while the serious sort declare
What beauty, grace and vision are,
Whence inspiration's crisis blends
And where sublime begins and ends,
Shall we two turn a postern key

And take the air of land and sea
Or hope to find awhile unmisted
Land and sea that once existed,
As those ladies lately met
Whom but Marie Antoinette,
Or were the momentary eye
For One to re-perceive her by ?

We shall admit the general taste
By which each form is viewed and placed ;
Great range of compilation there,
And of deduction equal care ;
How strong the balanced edifice !
In the meantime, lady, can you kiss ?
I hardly know if such a thought
Concurs with laws that Ruskin taught,
Or later masters of the art
Of keeping essences apart ;
If picturesque it rather be
Than beautiful alarms not me ;
But were we kissing I would say
That there was beauty in the day.

Emotion, hide yourself, allow
The proper altitude of brow !
Without you, we might closely measure
The degrees of critic pleasure.
And, Association, you
Flee, and colour not the view,
And let our pure analysis
Be unbeguiled with prejudice.

However, if you stay or go,
We have no faculty to know,
And therefore, in our fallen state,
Will not enquire what you are at,
But with unblushing cheek presume
That lavender's a rich perfume.

Besides, the coolest arbiters
Of beauty fall to snares of hers ;
Even while they portion and assess,
They like the rustling of her dress.
They would be as machines, but fail
And sing like any nightingale ;
About the stern defining phrase
A gay indefinition plays,
And grace steals in, and buds entwine
The long-debated steel design.
Sweet Cadence takes them ; then shall we
Fear to call this melody,
Fifed from the hedgerow silver-shrill
To trotting hoofs that climb the hill ?

CONSTANTIA AND FRANCIS

An Autumn Evening

Francis : Here we have found our goddess ; moor the boat
Softly beside this horned and mantled tree ;

Constantia : And with slow pace conceive our quiet hymn
And live awhile in this integrity.

Francis : The sun walks low in heaven, his lantern dim

Just yields a faithful light along the shade ;
By that last glimmering we may see that brow
Which, yet unseen, has never yet betrayed.

Constantia : The reeds, so crowding and so high, avow
She is well guarded ; their ten thousand spears
Are shining yet ; among them only move
A fish, a bird, and such small folk of hers.

Francis : But follow here, this caverned bank will prove
Her shrine, her canopy ; here, here she flowers —
Ah faded fay ! still let me bless this gift
Of mossy green for drowsy eyes like ours.

Constantia : What silver whisper into singing swift
Is rising ? But the dusk has many a thorn.
Within the circle is not gained this way ;
The star-dew and this winged lute-player warn.

Francis : She touched my cheek, I thought ; she seemed
to play
With my white hair as with this waving fern ;
It is as though I had my utmost wish,
And pains of wishing never need return.

Constantia : But, while we seek, you hear the fearless fish
Rise through the great pool sure of her regard ;
The oak's brown antlers glisten to her gaze,
The water-snake glides home. Our prayer's ill-starred.

Francis : We cannot shed the danger of our days.
She has her terror too ; we wound her dream.

Constantia : But let us bless her for the kind repulse,
And leave a farewell music on the stream.

THE BALLAST-HOLE

CAN malice live in natural forms,
As tree, or stone, or winding lane ?
Beside this winding lane of ours
The fangy roots of trees contain
A pond that seems to feed the powers
Of ugly passion. Thunder-storms
No blacker look. If forth it shook
Blue snarling flashes lightning-like,
I scarce should marvel ; may it strike
When I'm not by its sullen dyke !

FANCY AND MEMORY

ADIEU, young Fancy with the gipsy eye,
Sly slip of a ghost, your time with me is done ;
Once we were bold together, now good-bye,
Once you lit heaven, I now prefer the sun :
Flit on, delicious false one, and still please
The hearts you may awhile ; bring Sullen to his knees.

Your sister Memory is more welcome now.
She if she feigns at all seems without guile ;
She tells no tale for time to disavow,
No contraries but she will reconcile ;
With her I wonder less than love, and calm
Comes with no greater stir than dewy nightflowers' balm.

She makes the tiny nautilus sail sweet
Upon the shell-smooth lulling ocean-stream ;
And men who died arise and smile to see't,
And I am free to talk of life with them ;
She gives me temple-steps in warm west rain,
The crystal summit, thunderous pinewood, ripening plain.

Music she has that richly speaks her mind ;
So singing, she with Orpheus vies ; I hear,
And Flemish church-tower vanes glint in the wind
And man and horse and crow again live near, —
Man, horse, and guns and mines and tanks renew
Daybreak's demented duel — Memory, *et tu* ?

MENTAL HOSPITAL
I : TWO IN A CORNER

TRANQUIL enough they sit apart
In this safe tomb ;
Their eyes on one another turned
Reveal the one thing they have learned,
In life, if that word fit their gloom :
Heart given to heart.

If beauty be no myth or mode
Conventional,
These sister-faces are the least
With lineament of beauty blest ;
And yet I would not say they showed
No grace at all.

Hardly aware of joy or grief
As two extremes,
They sit half-lurking, leaning nearer,
Touching cheeks, true touch, no error ;
One bright fact still flowering belief
Amid dull dreams.

II : POOR TOM'S WELCOME

ALONG the rows the party goes,
Along the rows of withered men,
The girls with perfumed flower-like clothes,
The youths whose strength's the strength of ten —
And humbly sit those withered men,
The slow ones, in their den.

They see the raree-show float by,
They eye it with no wild concern —
It will go by ; it's bright enough,
But there's no seizing such cloud-stuff.
One roars his sudden loud return
To old ways, then stops stern.

But one there is who cannot stay
Unmoved ; the dwarf, he leaves his chair,
And shuffling works his apeish way
To the strangers ; and with smiling air
And no word said, holds out his hand,
And looks his *you will understand*.

They take his hand, now that, now this,
And he smiles on ; and then they're past.

Done is the courtesy, cold the bliss.
He sinks away as a dead leaf cast
Into some slack gray pool ; the light
Was brief, how long the night !

THE MEMORIAL, 1914-1918

AGAINST this lantern, shrill, alone
The wind springs out of the plain.
Such winds as this must fly and moan
Round the summit of every stone
On every hill ; and yet a strain
Beyond the measure elsewhere known
Seems here.

Who cries ? who mingles with the gale ?
Whose touch, so anxious and so weak, invents
A coldness in the coldness ? in this veil
Of whirling mist what hue of clay consents ?
Can atoms intercede ?

And are those shafted bold constructions there,
Mines more than golden, wheels that outrace need,
Crowded corons, victorious chimneys — are
Those touched with question too ? pale with the dream
Of those who in this aether-stream
Are urging yet their painful, woundful theme ?

Day flutters as a curtain, stirred
By a hidden hand ; the eye grows blurred.
Those towers, uncrystalled, fade.
The wind from north and east and south
Comes with its starved white mouth

And at this crowning trophy cannot rest —
No, speaks as something past plain words distressed.

Be still, if these your voices are ; this monolith
For you and your high sleep was made.
Some have had less.
No gratitude in deathlessness ?
No comprehension of the tribute paid ?

You would speak still ? Who with ?

INSCRIBED IN WAR-BOOKS

I

MORE rarely now the echo of these men
Sounds through the years ;
In towns which knew their rifle-numbers then
Not smiles nor tears
Start at their memory ; and this might be well,
Did such oblivion tell
Of an unwarlike and regenerate age,
And not of battles dark and worse presage.

II

These marched towards Death, or what seemed he,
And still their sense was liberty ;
As though his bulk and bulwark meant
Not close but opening of event,
As though his wall would prove an arch
And only dignify their march,
And, that got by, the curving road
Led where new airs and waters flowed,

New stars, new flowers, new faces shone ;
Whatever here had lost some tone
With all its song should be restored
To their own heightened souls' accord.

NOVEMBER 1, 1931

WE talked of ghosts ; and I was still alive ;
And I that very day was thirty-five ;
Alone once more, I stared about my room
And wished some ghost would be a friend and come ;
I cared not of what shape or semblance ; terror
Was nothing in comparison with error ;
I wished some ghost would come, to talk of fate,
And tell me why I drove my pen so late,
And help with observations on my knack
Of being always on the bivouac,
Here and elsewhere, for ever changing ground,
Finding and straightway losing what I found,
Baffled in time, fumbling each sequent date,
Mistaking Magdalen for the Menin Gate.
This much I saw without transmortal talk,
That war had quite changed my sublunar walk —
Forgive me, dear, honoured and saintly friends ;
Ingratitude suspect not ; this transcends.
Forgive, O sweet red-smiling love, forgive,
If this is life, for your delight I live ;
How every lamp, how every pavement flames
Your beauty at me, and your faith acclaims !
But from my silences your kindness grew,
And I surrendered for the time to you,
And still I hold you glorious and my own,

I'd take your hands, your lips ; but I'm alone.
So I was forced elsewhere, and would accost
For colloquy and guidance some kind ghost.
As one that with a serious trust was sent
Afar, and bandits seized him while he went,
And long delayed, so I ; I yearned to catch
What I should know before my grave dispatch
Was to be laid before that General
Who in a new Time cries ' backs to the wall.'
No ghost was granted me ; and I must face
Uncoached the masters of that Time and Space,
And there with downcast murmurings set out
What my gross late appearance was about.

THE RECOVERY

FROM the dark mood's control
I free this man ; there's light still in the West.
The most virtuous, chaste, melodious soul
Never was better blest.

Here medicine for the mind
Lies in a gilded shade ; this feather stirs
And my faith lives ; the touch of this tree's rind, —
And temperate sense recurs.

No longer the loud pursuit
Of self-made clamours dulls the ear ; here dwell
Twilight societies, twig, fungus, root,
Soundless, and speaking well.

Beneath the accustomed dome
Of this chance-planted, many-centuried tree
The snake-marked earthy multitudes are come
To breathe their hour like me.

The leaf comes curling down,
Another and another, gleam on gleam ;
Above, celestial leafage glistens on,
Borne by time's blue stream.

The meadow-stream will serve
For my refreshment ; that high glory yields
Imaginings that slay ; the safe paths curve
Through unexalted fields

Like these, where now no more
My early angels walk and call and fly,
But the mouse stays his nibbling, to explore
My eye with his bright eye.

ANOTHER ALTAR

I AM Forgetfulness. I am that shadow
Of whom well warned you thought your pathway clear.
You need sharp eyes to catch such silent shadows.
Not all your wakeful plans and resolution
Outsoldiered me ; you heard me at last low-laughing,
' When the steed's stolen, shut the stable-door.'
This, too, is nothing of mine. No sly ambition
Nor malice moves me ; but my part is fixed
In changing onward life from scene to scene,
Necessitating futures of surprise,

Solving some enigmas, much preserving
To bloom a wonder in a way the sowers
Could never have guessed. I touch the cells of the mind,
And some are by that finger barred and bolted ;
It may be but a moment that I triumph ;
Consider what my moments still achieve.

Through me the wife learns who the mistress is,
And where. I trap the assassin, and safe murder
Becomes a dance on air. One look from me
And the mind's eye of the signalman is dimmed
And wreckage piles and flames above the dead.
I have contrived that some most secret treasures
Shall lie an age untouched, and late-discovered
Should be the source of hope and peace ; I leave
The child's toy to become posterity's marvel,
From lost Tanagra ; this quaint poniard lurked
Under my influence, where the culprit stowed it,
To tell man something of his martyrdoms,
Upon a day. From these my hoarded papers
At length uncovered, an impoverished fame
Grows full and noonday-clear ; with that, your scholar
Is charmed with joys not his, and shall not fail
Of praise and proud remembrance — while I will.
Be sure, unsure of most, that I will make
An instrument of you this very day,
That I may weave my share of Then and Now,
A web that greater gods design — with me.
He that now writes the words I whisper to him
Has here and there unknowingly surrendered
To my caprice, if so he please to style it,
And will still find his early morning again,

Through me, after a dry and drouthy journey,
All fresh and violet-dewy ; he, at least,
Will not disdain to bow to me as one
Among the more ingenious undergods.

A CALM RAIN

' COME, shy and almost-silent rain ;
Low-whisperer, all thy reminiscence yield
Across this field,
Among these houses come, and kiss this flower ;
Befall me with the secret of Verlaine
That answered thee so well, and answering thee was
healed ;
Or thy dim veil will bring me a long hour
Of twilight listening under Eastern eaves
For breathing leaves
That loved thy coming too, and the crossroad stone
Once made a god, that stood afield alone
And to thy touch seemed as a brow renewed
By infancy's or love's beatitude.
Moving as now thou dost, thy tender power
Defeating time's hard march has called the halt,
And in this nook made union without fault
Of places, senses, wonderings, O pale shower,
That seemed asunder ; mountains and sands and seas,
And cliffs and chasms of life, had parted these ;
My soul lost hold of what had been, beyond,
As though there were none but a racial bond
Between her and the former friend to thee,
That even in war's corruptions sang to thee,
And found thee true in fiery pits that leapt

In blood and wounds, and knew one angel wept,
Last naked hearths and newest graves were thine,
I wooed thy word, I had thy sign.'

So this still rain beguiled my mood and verse,
But I awake ; I dreamed ; what worth is his
Who fashions thus a selfish universe,
And weaves dead leaves with living tragedies ?
While the strong world goes forth in symphonies
Of action, passion, science and resource,
Where shall faint music and far similes
Befriend it ? has this stealing shower a force ?
And yet I fancy sometimes there is pain
That still requires this shy and dream-like rain.

DESIRE AND DELIGHT

DESIRE, the lovelier prophet of delight !
Forerunner from whose starry look
The world a rarer meaning took
Than ever lived in the consequence, though bright :
Dreamer of marvellous venture, music, creed,
Still triumph ; not to thee the blame
If thine announcèd lack thy flame,
And after thee prove but a broken reed.

THE EXCELLENT IRONY

' TIME was when I could play with time,
And every breath of summer flowers
Was sweet for hours ;
And now I work like life in lime.

' Time was when meadowy hills made height
To show me sea and sky and shore
Unknown before ;
In this cheap booth I spar and fight.

' Time comes when from my shafts, my mill
I shall be not untimely led,
And soundly dead ;
Careless who does the dusty drill.'

Time heard him thus, and smiled ; a glance
Rebuked, forgave, and changed the case.
A voice, a face,
A grace made all his hours one dance.

ON SOME CROCUSES
At Trinity College, Cambridge

LIGHT and busy wings, beating this bright air ;
Chimings, chirpings, clarionings, — O come to the Fair !

It is no Fair, the host of crocuses reply,
We are here and lovely are, — but see how we die.

Though the Sun now pour life about our hoods,
Though we are gayer and more than windflowers in the
woods,

Some in saffron, some in sea-gray violet,
Crinkled, pied or pure of bloom, our sun hastes to set.

Then, strange flowers, have you my trouble ? may I not
Take from you a glance or two to say Time's forgot ?

Gaze now at the Sun, call the brown bees in,
Tremble only as the breezes run and let the Fair begin.

Noon lies deep and clear, these in silence rest
Poised beyond remorse and fear, timelessly blest,

As though yielding me one more sign of the theme :
Some of Time's own children are free of his own rule
and scheme.

ARGUMENT IN SPRING

WHAT you have heard from countless friends
On days uncounted
I come repeating ; new occasion lends
Much colour here ; the fine young sunshine ends
That row of cyphers to which the winter's tale amounted.

So, let your gleaming hair receive
This free bright rally
Of weather ; you deserve compassionate leave
As wise campaigners called it ; or, retrieve
The sense of the upper hand with a timely brilliant sally.

Not that the field to win is theirs —
Shame my comparison !
The thing is merely, come and sip these airs, —
How civilly the flock its meadow shares,
No sort of garrison.

The bird with cowslip-plumes, the wren
 With brown breast peaceful
Along the hedge, above the jacks-of-the-green
And hooded lords-and-ladies just now seen
 Makes futures easeful.

Rainbows just now will almost spring
 From your shoe-laces ;
Hills woo the hand ; and is it bells that ring,
Or can a spire by itself of its beauty sing,
 Music be places ?

Enter where China's branch, unvexed
 In China's quarrel,
Has made her ivory flowers again ; and next
Japan's cydonia, safe and unperplexed,
Foreblossoms our quince ; but no more words ; and
 a kiss for moral.

VERSES IN REMINISCENCE AND DELIGHT

SHRILL and small the wind in the reeds and sedges,
In the just-leaving willow and late thorn-hedges,
 Made that music which once I seemed
To understand ; its word I dreamed.

Thence no statement, challenge or ghostly yearning
Now was speaking for me ; the waters returning
 Into the sea, though clear we heard
Their rippling run, said never a word.

Stars were thrilling again through the dome called heaven,
Lights that once were a signal to me most given ;

One that was with me spoke of these
Insentient great ones over the trees ;

Wisely spoke ; then further than ever receded
Hours when Orion forth-beamed the code I needed ;
Wise was she, and made no fault
In asserting that ancient phrase ' heaven's vault ' ;

Whence, with beauty of heart she forswore her science,
Bidding all those altered signs defiance.
Sweetly into the village come,
She gave me a new-heard syllable, — home.

You could never know our home from another,
' Door answers door, each cottage has its brother ' ;
Though I showed you the gate and roof,
Those would yield you no good proof.

Latched the gate, the hill-crowns and nebulae hidden,
She and I were a universe on a sudden ;
Though you read your Donne for years,
That transcendency's mine and hers.

Voices, messages, auguries once my blessing
Lost in twilight meadows beyond my guessing,
All that made my lifeway shine
Were again, in one song mine.

My story none, unless the Avilion of loving
Found in a little room, seem hard of proving,
Oneness and togetherness,
A conquest over time, no less.

Listen, though no thin-built line of recording
Creeps within a star's distance of that rewarding ;
 She in that small dusky room
 Was hope and faith, was bud and bloom,

Rule and rest, and where she was, no trial,
No reward, no absence was, no demand, no denial ;
 In her arms I fell asleep,
 I had her in my arms to keep.

Falling asleep when thus we were deep acquainted
Was as though we two were beyond life's common tented,
 There in that dim rustic cave
 With the firelight's casual golden wave

Playing on her, when the falling ash aroused me,
Half-abashed at the charm that had softly drowsed me ;
 Still I found her gazing kind,
 I saw her eyes, I saw her mind.

Wakened wide, I held her there to adore her,
Glorying in the race and kind that bore her,
 Above all, living by her being there,
 By all of her from heart to hair ;

Quiet and fine and smiling, giving, believing,
Spirit-like, the extreme of my achieving ;
 For it was a true, a perfect pride
 That my worn self saw such a bride,

Daring an unstarred, songless road of chances
Where the very lark tuned devil's dances,

She in her innocent liberty
Had wished to share her joy with me.

Hear who will, this song is as all yet uttered ;
There's not a secret that ever was shouted or muttered
That can at all be apprehended
By those who knew it not ; my song is ended.

A NIGHT-PIECE
From the Greek of Alcman

ASLEEP ; the pinnacles and the precipices of the mountains,
Headlands, and torrents, and all that walk and creep
On the shadowy earth that breeds them ; the beasts that
haunt in the mountains,
The world of bees, the kraken in the blue deep ;
Even the orders of birds of widest wing are asleep.

TO THE CICADA
From the Greek of an Anacreontic writer

WE bless you, cicada,
When out of the tree-tops
Having sipped of the dew
Like a king you are singing ;
And indeed you are king of
These meadows around us,
And the woodland's all yours.
Man's dear little neighbour,
And midsummer's envoy,
The Muses all love you,

And Apollo himself does —
He gave you your music.
Age cannot wither you,
Tiny philosopher,
Earth-child, musician ;
The world, flesh and devil
Accost you so little,
That you might be a god.

‘ SUITABLE ADVICE ’
From the Greek Anthology

FIXING his pinchers on the snake,
Thus spake
The crab : ‘ It’s
Time for you, mate,
To go straight ;
No more crooked habits.’

EPITAPH FOR SOPHOCLES
From the Greek of Simias

SOFTLY, ivy, steal upon
The resting-place of Sophocles ;
There unloose your tresses wan
As softly as you please ;
And I would have the rose come too,
And come, glad vine, with harvest due
To be with him whose powerful sense
Quired with such eloquence,
None can tell if his full song
Would most to Muse or Grace belong.

THE DOG FROM MALTA

From the Greek Anthology

HE came from Malta, and Eumelus says
He had no dog like him in all his days ;
We called him Bull ; he went into the dark ;
Along those roads we cannot hear him bark.

A TALE NOT IN CHAUCER

Not even in Dryden's Chaucer

IN *France*, no matter what the Town, there stood
A Convent, justly fam'd for doing good,
Where ev'ry day just twenty Paupers ate
A Dinner giv'n 'em freely at the Gate.
A DOG there was, who notic'd this Regale,
And join'd the Crew each day with wagging Tail.
But they were hungry Gents ; the luckless Beast
Got nothing but th' Aroma of the Feast.
Now mark, each Portion was deliver'd thus :
A Serving-man remain'd within the House
And plac'd the Food within a round Machine,
And turn'd it outward ; 'twas receiv'd unseen.
All this upon the ringing of a Bell.
The DOG discover'd he could toll it well,
And one Day when th' unshaven Sort had din'd
He seiz'd the Rope, which work'd as he design'd ;
The turn'd Machine display'd the wish'd-for Roast,
The grinning Rogue approv'd and no Time lost.
And the next Day and ev'ry Day he came,
The same Bell pull'd and gain'd his Meal the same.
But what in this vain World is permanent ?
The Cook within with Grief observ'd, there went

Twenty-one Portions from his Grill each Day,
 And Twenty was laid down. ' O let me lay,
 Almighty God, the Villain by the Heels
 Who thus extends this Privilege of Meals.'
 He lurks, and looks.—The twenty Hoboes pass'd
 And grabb'd their Grub. The twentieth was the last.
 Only a DOG remain'd, and what of that ?
 And yet the Animal seem'd strangely fat.
Monsieur reflected, and Suspicion grew :
 The DOG before his Eyes rose, rang and drew
 A mighty Plateful of the Convent's Beef.
 Away went Cook, to state the Case and Thief.
 But the Community with Pleasure heard,
 And deem'd th' ingenious DOG should have Reward,
 And order'd that each Day his heap'd-up Plate
 Should be supply'd him when he call'd for that ;
 The Pensioner well pleas'd maintain'd his Place,
 And dy'd the Father of a num'rous Race.

AN ANCIENT, BUT JUBILANT BALLAD (1696)

So soon as the news reached Flanders —
 The word that our good King
 Was safe — our great Commanders
 And we for joy did sing ;
 And up they started as Christians ought
 To choose a proper way
 To celebrate vile Traitors caught
 And justify the day.

And they, I tell you, — same again, —
 Being Men of their Word, decided

That a Bonfire of the size of ten
Should immediately be provided ;
And to burn the French king's Magazine
At a place they call Jivett
Was what they hit on ; it lay between
We and another set.

Six days' rations was issued,
And out we Foot led off,
Mud as usual, and I tissued
And had a hacking Cough ;
The Horse and 'Tillery followed on,
One day's march astern,
Their leaders were the Earl of Athlone
And General Z. Coehorn.

We crossed a stream they called the Mews,
I scented one dead cat,
Them Flanders waters are mostly ooze,
The Ark chose Ararat.
And next we crossed the River Leile,
Three bridges swiftly laid
Carried us over on even keel
Though the Colour-Sergeant swayed.

The truth if you must hear it
He had swiped the Company's rum ;
Well, now we were getting near it —
Don't you hear that doubling drum ?
Says Captain Hubble, ' Thirsty, hey ?
Now boys we shan't be long,'
And one of the Columns marched away
To cover proud Dinant.

But we kept going, my next man
 Showed a picture of his wench,
And I said, Why don't be vexed man,
 We're to get some off the French ;
And then Jivett came into sight,
 We halted 'side a wood,
And the Sappers and Guns went on a mite,
 And I tell you they looked good.

We piled our arms, and rested,
 Lit fires, and some wrote letters,
And black Jack Frost molested
 We privates and our betters ;
I toasted a capital whiting
 That I'd bought from a sweet Walloon,
And I dreamed, something better than fighting,
 Of the old farm under the moon.

At seven o'clock in the morning —
 Why, what you please ; thank you —
With red-hot Bullets burning
 And Bombs our big guns threw,
The Forage in Jivett took fire,
 And in sprung some of the Foot ;
I saw as I went a French monsire
 Dead, stript and black as soot.

Us men that had been chosen
 All carried blazing Flambeaus,
Not to keep us from being frozen
 But to plague the French, the damn' beaus.

We forced in, fierce as ganders,
Into streets all smoke and rubble,
But I didn't see no Commanders,
Only Captains Gray and Hubble.

Says Hubble : ' Hodge, this way, man,
I've money for you to burn ;
We'll settle their oats and hay, man,
And then this pretty Cazern.'
And just as he stopped some musqueteer
Nipped out of an alley and fired,
And Hubble went at him, I raised a cheer
And the enemy retired.

Well, now the Stores and the Quarters
Were well on flames all round ;
Most had been caught by our Mortars,
And t'others our first wave found ;
Yet, sir, don't misunderstand me,
The private dwellings all
Though several stood so handy,
Felt nothing of match or ball.

There never was Conflagration
So carefully lotted out ;
I studied the situation
After catching a mongrel a clout ;
The Hay, Straw, Oats and Bisket
And Barracks were all in cinders,
But the Churches and Houses, I'll risk it,
Hadn't lost a saint from the windows.

Trumpeter blew, and the wind blew,
My fingers rattled, and still
I could grin, my chum could grin too,
As he set me, ' How many d'you kill ? '
I'd only seen one old Bluebeard
And gave him a cuff for his tricks,
And he'd run like six Monkeys and blubbered
Enough for six widows ; so, ' Six.'

So now in the smoke we withdrew,
And the marvellous vast Magazine
Was crackling away to the blue,
And we were led back, and got clean.
The best raid I ever was sent on,
And settled the score with Crapō,
And should stop any further attempt on
The life of the best King I know.

CHOICE AND CHANCE

TO SYLVA

Now you can hardly prove
 There ever was a winter ; now
 The unremembering bough,
The nest on that, the blue above
Deny the interlude.
 Some few hours
 Have robed and crowned with flowers
Lightsome life ennewed.

Now historian thought
 May lie at home, and politic doubt
 Deserves not to walk out.
With petals, not with presage, fraught
We take the path that brings
 The summer smell
 Of furry leaf and dewy bell,
Sensitive green things.

FULL BLOOM

THIS time of year the sparrow takes
 Wild parsley for a tree,
And the wild parsley scarcely shakes
 Beneath His Liberty ;
The ease of summer's full-bloomed body
Becomes bright corn and oakwood shady.

About the pool the fishes glide
 With indolent possession ;

And hobby-horses skirr aside
Grown great beyond expression ;
The flower I love's the water-lily,
In whom this season's painted fully.

SPIRIT-WIND

SWAY those green worlds of leaves, dear summer ghost,
Flying and singing through my thoughts of them ;
Let them make music, let them drowse and dream
In that blue day where you again are lost,
And yet not lost, for once again your wing
Comes home again, you flit and fling
The tuneable airs, and with them theirs,
Where I am tracing the anglers' lairs
And thinking that most bright and living stream
Will never cease to play, nor you to sing.

Then I was wiser than I knew ; you rise,
You lift the burden of surcharged low skies,
Which at a start of your wing-fancy prove
Mere forms of doubt — yet no intention drove
Those ranked cloud-faces huddling cheek by jowl
Between fair day and me one yard aloof
Till you, the lightest breeze that ever did cool
A day in June, whispered their clear disproof,
And here you have me following song and love
Below your oaks, beside your lily-pool.

THE HILL

I LOVE my hill, and you would love it too
If chance would show it you ;

But my attempt to bring you both together
Might prove dull weather ;
Praise is not safe, description will not do.

Praise is not safe ; you are of human kind,
And have a hill in mind
Long dear to you, which only would gain glory
Through my proud story ;
Description leaves the one joy undefined.

I leave my hill and you to chance, I wait
For your white violet
Borne from the sunk lane side, or your new brilliance,
Zephyr'd resilience,
When my hill first has opened you heaven's gate.

GROWN UP

I GRUDGE a year, or hardly that,
Dropped in the spectral hole
Where all the good years meet their fate
With the bad ones in one shoal.

I grudge that year, not for its prank
Of dyeing brown hair gray,
Not for the many pages blank
That showed my powers astray ;

Not for this failure in affairs,
Nor that in intercourse,
Nor wasted chance of flowers, sweet airs,
Far countries my remorse.

A year ago, I owned a sprite,
A roguish girl, who grinned
With mischief and with young delight
As she darted like the wind

Among the urchins on the green,
Before my solemn gate ;
My black-eyed goblin of thirteen
Was the bowler fast and straight,

And free she flung her elflocks back
When she took the bat herself ;
She scared the starlings on the stack,—
But I have lost my elf,

Who never said a word to me
But looked a world of laughter ;
Now she goes quiet as can be,
Nigh woman — one year after.

INTO THE DISTANCE

SILENT they stand and into silence hoard
The time, the scene, the light, the voices few
That come from farm and road below the hill.

For all this evening world they know no word ;
Would find one if they could, a lucky clue
To what they gaze upon ; they never will.

Thus baffled, after many forms have passed
Before them of high wheeling cloud, rich fire,
Blue serpent vapours, sudden-silvered towers,

Green oakwood verges, gone again, at last
They leave this vision of the darkening shire
And talk along, grudging the rapid hours.

‘ Do you remember,’ years away I hear,
‘ One evening when we stood on Furzes Hill ?
Where have such evenings gone ? ’ ‘ I wish I knew.

I well remember. It was dark, and clear ;
Happy, and sad ; remote and near ; stood still
And glided by.’ ‘ That’s Life ; I meant, the view.’

LONG MOMENTS

A SHADOW lay along my wall
Like a shark in a sandy bay,
And on my mind a yellow dullness
Lay, and lay, and lay,
Yet from the wall I could not will
My eyes away.

Messages came from the simple world
Of the village beyond the wall,
The clink of work and bell of time
And stroke of bat and ball,
But nothing stirred the weed which wove
My mind and the shadow on the wall,

Until from years and years before
From a day that had looked dead gray,

Another dullness and stagnant silence,
Came an inward ray
That over ghostly roofs now drew
My soul away.

THE SURPRISE

SHOT from the zenith of desire
Some faultless beams found where I lay,
Not much expecting such white fire
Across a slow close working-day.

What a great song then sang the brook,
The fallen pillar's grace how new ;
The vast white oaks like cowslips shook —
And I was winged, and flew to you.

AFTERNOON IN JAPAN

COME to the shrine, the thousandth stair
Of worn gray stone will find us there,
And all the way each side a shop
To teach us, Wisdom's at the top.
So you will buy me, going up,
A walking-stick and *saké*-cup ;
And I'll buy you a small black devil
Whose eyes shoot out (he's none too civil)
On stalks ; but they'll go in again —
I think this bogey's worth a *yen*.
You don't ? How many stairs is that ?
I beg to stroke this tea-house cat,
And, since you press me, yes, I will ;

My summer sports are, sitting still ;
And ice may marry well with beer,
And — what, they serve *Awabi* here ?
Ah well, the shrine will still be there
When we have climbed the thousandth stair.

THE COTTAGE AT CHIGASAKI

THAT well you draw from is the coldest drink
In all the country Fuji looks upon ;
And me, I never come to it but I think
The poet lived here once who one hot noon
Came dry and eager, and with wonder saw
The morning-glory ¹ about the bucket twined,
Then with a holy heart went out to draw
His gallon where he might ; the poem's signed
By him and Nature. We need not retire,
But freely dip, and wash away the salt
And sand we've carried from the sea's blue fire ;
Discuss a melon ; and without great fault,
Though comfort is not poetry's best friend,
We'll write a poem too, and sleep at the end.

SOUTH ATLANTIC

FLITTING from pulley-block to wheelhouse roof,
Some frightened bird is never absent now ;
These tiny beauties have not luck enough, —
They find us friends, O joy ! but no sweet bough,

¹ Perhaps the most familiar Japanese poem is that which says, approximately, ' The morning-glory has taken hold of the well-bucket ; I'll borrow some water elsewhere.'

No fruit, no seed, no pool rewards them tired
With their blown flight across metallic miles
On miles of sea. All's metal, hot and wired
This seeming refuge ; nothing reconciles
All that they know with this. The brilliant wing
That soon we lose defeats us like the breath
Of that vast body of land we seem to hear
As yet unseen, that process thronging the air
With a rich illness, fruitful poisoning
And ambiguity of life and death.

REFLECTIONS

MIRROR of wall and tree, of cloud and star,
Still making phantoms, wooing us passing by
To droop our look from the summer sky
And the ornament of the sparkling air,
Enchanted with thy copy ! The lovely lie
Has a strange calm in't. Those trees have no zeal
Of tragic glory, breathe no life, no death
In their cool dusky sprays — the scattered curls
Of roses float there, but no contact find.
These, having neither blood nor breath,
No voice to raise, no wound to heal,
Are kinder than the kind.

THE TOAD

' I LIKE my twilight walk as well as you,
Among these grassy mounds and mossy stones,
And might have hoped my age and feeble health
Would earn me more respect than what you show,

Seizing me thus with hot and dangerous hands,
And from the broad secure bosom of earth
Raising me almost steeple-height. — My thanks.
Now I can hint my meaning with less toil. —
Your prisoner still, I take it. I have need,
Unknown to you, to reach the flinty wall
Over whose ridge the watching horse now droops
His vast and harmless head, before the bat
Has circled half his habitual tour ; release me.
Be kind and courteous to this gentleman ;
I dare require that style, my mansion being
In the brick vault of one called Armiger,
And marbled over ; time is time, in haste
I spend my span, as he did and as you do ;
Perhaps in the morning you will find me at leisure
Under the melon-light of a fan-like leaf
In the near corner of the parson's garden,
But now I claim your courtesy and my path.'

LARK DESCENDING

A SINGING firework ; the sun's darling ;
Hark how creation pleads !
Then silence : see, a small gray bird
That runs among the weeds.

' SENTIMENTAL '

I GATHER from a survey of
The *Ultimate Review*,
God showed too much sentiment
In making bluebells blue.

ANONYMOUS DONORS

A MYRIAD gifts, and whence ? To whom
May I address my thanks
For this stile-path, this pond, this coombe,
These hazelled violet-banks ?

FUR COAT

THE heifer eyed us both and chose
Sylva as nearer kin,
Touched her fur coat with friendly nose,
— Almost a proper skin.

THEOLOGY OVER THE GATE

‘ WE have no God, though old Miss Moon still seeks
The daily sign, and though alternate weeks
The Reverend Grosstête with some show of proof
Instals The Word above The Cloven Hoof.
I’m not accomplished in that kind of thing,
I like the Reverend, and I’ve heard the day
When he could preach as plain as thrushes sing,
But he’s a touch of Rome now, so they say.
We ring the bells of course ; and there’s a choir,
And as you see the churchyard’s looking well,
It’s right for roses ; we’ve re-tiled the spire,
And if ten come to Mattins it’s a miracle.

‘ But if you understand me I’ve been struck
With something in the look

Of this old village, never mind the church.
I never had to search
No Polyglot New Testament for that,
You'll think perhaps I'm talking through my hat
When I say sometimes in the evening glow
From my old garret I look out below
And see the cotes and stables, pens and pounds
And poor chaps spoiling their allotment grounds,
And mothers teaching babies how to walk,
This one and that in confidential talk,
All unafraid, down to the duck and hen
And rabbits playing by their nettly den ;
If you'll believe me, then I dream or see
We have a god, spelt with a little g.'

UNLUCKY ALLUSIONS

' WHEN I was here in the War,' he said,
' There was life enough in the place ;
' There was always a crowd at the Golden Head
And ' —. The lady made a face,
And (wrapping the bottle) reproved him : ' Ah ;
' On n'était pas très correct, là-bas.'

One day he'll make his mistake again,
When he's having a word at the Gate ;
' Yes, we saw some great nights, and some very good men
At the Cock ' —. ' You needn't wait,'
St. Peter will hastily interject,
' Là-bas, on n'était pas très correct.'

A THOUGHT OF THE DOWNS

COME now, my love without whom nothing wakes,
My Sylva, let me show
Something of what I owe
To your discovering dearness ; my mind breaks
The barriers of the hour and task, — we stand
Delighted, arm in arm, to spy the land
That in its amphitheatre includes
Fallows, and cotes, and brown-tiled spires, and dells,
Elm-colonnades, and close seigniorial woods,
And the near ploughman whistling out his spells.
We stand here tenderly, that painted shells
In the silverweed from us take no offence,
And mouse and rabbit come in confidence,
And if the tired leaf flutter anywhere,
It comes to rest on your sweet hand or hair.

If the sharp wind, that skimmed the sea just now,
Be kind at all, he's so, to kiss your brow,
And if those men who darkly in the past
Broke flints and lit their fires and dug their ponds
Here — if those men are powers to bless or blast
Steps that invade their homes and burial-mounds,
I think I feel them gazing mild on you
As does the Unicorn, by legend true,
When, flaring up to charge deceitful man,
He sees a Virgin ; he can smile, he can.

So now, the ghosts with black fierce heads grow kind
And wish you always here : Now you shall find
Our supper, coasting these warm furzes, these
The Mushroom long has chosen for his haunt ;

Under their eaves he crowds by companies
And thinks of other fungi, lean and gaunt,
Unlucky ne'er-do-wells, that spring elsewhere.
So pride must have a fall ; you have him there,
And there, and there ; the stoic seems content,
For Sylva he perceives he by the stars was meant.

Well thought, old Mushroom ; I in turn agree,
And add, this lady even was meant for me ;
Whom now, for she's still hunting, I will seize
And carry to some higher crow-perch yet,
And claim her kiss, and think, I crossed those seas,
Dodged many deaths, and now at last have met
One who must be the vision and the crown
Of my best self, as now she is of this green Down.

A PROLOGUE

*To a volume by several authors on the country round Christ's
Hospital (removed from London to Sussex in 1902)*

AN offering to the Kindness
That rules this countryside ! and in the expression
Be mingled some confession
Of lethargy and blindness
Through which each one of us has often wasted
The day's rich glories here, left the sweet spring untasted !

Poor Blues whom Elia knew on whole-day-leaves
Got past the city streets with much ado,
And hailed the shining streams and wantoned there
With glee of enterprise ! Brave fields, dream
woods, blue air ;

But all too soon the Wen again receives
The captives, and the dreary Gate clangs to.

Then came the emancipation.
The barricades are vanished, summer grasses
In fragrant undulation
Surround us, now there passes
None but the bee's, the rook's, the reaper's traffic,
And heaven's gold-fretted roof resounds the true seraphic.

Now there was pioneering ; now the boy
Even as he coned his book or poled his bed
Had Sussex light and lure with him ; the sun
Came in with songs and colloquies of joy,
And he might like a peasant stroll and run
Through windflower-brakes cool-mossed where twinkling
woodgates led.

Thus hamlet, brookside, riding
Became familiar ; even were taken for granted ;
Summers went swiftly gliding,
Perhaps too wholly enchanted !
And who but grieves to think that sylvan wonder
(Which Shelley met before) and he should drift asunder ?

Sylvan and human, still it blooms and calls.
Past Bonfire Hill to Muntham Woods the grace
Of this kind secret sings with every dove ;
No airy nothing lacking bound and place,
It likes its own small spires, its ponds, its walls,
Asking the closest conscience of observant love.

THE BRANCH LINE

PROFESSING loud energy, out of the junction departed
The branch-line engine. The small train rounded the
bend

Watched by us pilgrims of summer, and most by me, —
Who had known this picture since first my travelling
started,

And knew it as sadly pleasant, the usual end
Of singing returns to beloved simplicity.

The small train went from view behind the plantation,
Monotonous, — but there's a grace in monotony !
I felt its journey, I watched in imagination
Its brown smoke spun with sunshine wandering free
Past the great weir with its round flood-mirror beneath,
And where the magpie rises from orchard shadows,
And among the oasts, and like a rosy wreath
Mimicking children's flower-play in the meadows.

The thing so easy, so daily, of so small stature
Gave me another picture : of war's warped face
Where still the sun and the leaf and the lark praised
Nature,
But no little engine bustled from place to place ;
When summer succeeded summer, yet only ghosts
Or to-morrow's ghosts could venture hand or foot
In the track between the terrible telegraph-posts, —
The end of all things lying between the hut
Which lurked this side, and the shattered local train
That.

So easy it was ; and should that come again —.

HOUSING QUESTION

UNDER protecting mounds of ancient hills
The soldier hewed himself a million homes,
Cut chalky corridors, broadened safe rooms,
Drove vents through which his smoky air might creep,
And, leaving war to screech and wrench outside,
Had here some means for food, sleep, cards and dreams.

Beneath the ruins of the town-end too,
Where war still watched for any sign of life,
He fixed his candle in the cellar wall,
And came and went through the low-gashed brick, and
thought

His luck was in while others in their capes
Crouched in the hiss of hot shells under a sky
Of steel and sleet. In the best times he found
Some flowery dewy bush just touch his cheek
In his night exit from the hole that held
His mates, their rifles and their human world ;
Or, charmed with sun and inactivity,
He nailed a horseshoe over his door.

This man,

Where he escaped, and found he wore no longer
A knife to kill with, and a mask to breathe with,
Not altogether lost the surly love
He had for his ' little gray home in the west ' ; what stood
Between him and the furies, he remembers,
His temporary good fortune he remembers,
And though the earth has closed on every stick
He put to the building, he knows what it meant.

Of this affection, all that ever were born
Of woman have their share ; that word ' inhabit '
Richly irradiates man's dark-wandering myth.
Those whom chance and merciless design
Thrust into peace-time holes, hovels and dens
Inhabit there, and make the balance well.
But in my fancy, compared with them, my soldier
Was some ways fortunate ; his homely shelter,
Punished with hellfire, was better in its problem
Than what too many have, from their first cry
Cramped in a dugout useless to repel
The other war, weaponed with all disease,
That sees and takes the attractive aiming-mark.

SOME TALK OF PEACE —

DARK War, exploding loud mephitic mines,
Or with a single shot destroying twenty,
Was in a way reserved, polite and dainty.
Then there was not much felt of cold designs,
Murder that chanced seemed past man's guiding-lines,
And conscience never flushed for that grim throe.

Peace, lovely lady, is too fine to shout
Her power abroad ; seldom she lays us low
As the machine-guns stretched the storm-troops out ;
She gives us time to answer Yes or No.
She may not kill ; she even keeps alive
Those whom their faces or their foes deprive
Of joy and equity ; and we live in doubt
Whether her sins or War's more misery sow.

THE LOST BATTALION

'To dream again.' That chance. There were no fences,
No failures, no impossibles, no tenses.
Here's the huge sulky ship, the captain's room,
The swilling decks like hillsides, the iron boom
Of ocean's pugilism, black faces, low
Corner-cabals — 'Where are we bound? d'ye know?'
And now, long months being drummed into our lives,
The bells ring back and fro, the boat arrives —
We've seen this place, does no one know its *name*?
Name missing. But we'll get there all the same.
It's all the same. I thought the war was done.
We'll have to hurry, the Battalion's gone.
How on again? Only an Armistice.
I thought my nerves weren't quite so bad as this.
That white house hangs on strangely, turn sharp right,
And the instant war spreads gray and mute in sight.
I feel my old gear on my back, and know
My general job in this forthcoming show;
But what's the catch, the difference? Someone speak!
Name wanted, or I shan't get there this week.

FROM AGE TO AGE

RETARDED into history's marble eyes
Is their quick challenge and ability;
All the expression of their enterprise,
The fierce, the rapt, the generous and the free.
Behold their monument; no more is now to see.

Travel this cool white day across this plain,
Count farms and haycocks, think of dead event,

Count all these graves, count every pang and pain
Which put them here ; but life will not relent.
Hardly the deathmask held one hour their last intent.

Action, eternal fire ! from brain to brain,
From race to race, and age to age on-leaping,
Leaves the charred embers to the steady rain ;
Over the skeleton the grass comes creeping,
And life's too short for wondering, too aflame for weeping.

TO THE SOUTHDOWNS,
On their dining again together, 1934

COME, and defy or else forget
The hurrying years ; we're Southdowns yet,
And if we heard the bugle-call,
Could still fall in and beat them all —
But peaceful now the call arrives ;
No arms to slope but forks and knives,
No sandbags here though we may be
Windbags for once and still agree ;
We here may sit around and dine
Unvexed by gas alarm or mine,
And know the rations will come up
Without objections from Von Krupp.
In Pop. we banqueted no doubt
On *vin-blong*, malaga-and-stout,
On ' eggs and ships ' ; with Ruby Queens
We once crowned feeds of pork and beans.
Some happy days there were. But some —

However, that's all over. Come ;
The M.M.P.'s have lost their way,
And no day now will be Z Day.
No foot, no kit inspection ; nor
Must we by eyewash win the war ;
The duckboard-track is all deserted,
The very Padre's been converted,
The General's raising veal and swedes, —
Those new recruits the Empire needs, —
The Transport now could hardly tell
A mule from a monkey ; all is well !
The old cross-roads are calm to-night,
Jerry's relieving, stars shine bright —
So, to All Ranks good appetite !

AT RUGMER

AMONG sequestered farms and where brown orchards
Weave in the thin and coiling wind, and where
The pale cold river ripples still as moorhens
Work their restless crossing,
Among such places, when October warnings
Sound from each kex and thorn and shifting leaf,
We well might wander, and renew some stories
Of a dim time when we were kex and thorn,
Sere leaf, ready to hear a hissing wind
Whip down and wipe us out ; our season seemed
At any second closing.
So, we were wrong. But we have lived this landscape,
And have an understanding with these shades.

EXPERIENCE TEACHES . . .

LEARNED in life, across white fields
To walls and windows not unkind,
The missel-bird and blackcap come :
There's a man digging, soon he'll find
A worm or two, that earth still yields
If this kind clever man unbind
Its frozen strange strong-room.

For your bright eye of confidence,
And common-sense,
My missel-thrush, I wish you well.
Worms might not think this wish in order ;
They cannot think, my wise friends tell, —
They grope outside thought's curious border.
We'll not stand on special terms ;
Thrushes are thinkers, worms are worms.

But where the most accomplished thrush
Sits waiting in the frosty hush,
I must confess some anxious fear.
The quietest, subtlest cat prowls here,
More rapid than a gipsy's knife,
A bird-observer, learned in life.

STORMY NIGHT

ONCE more above the gale that square dark tower
Bombards with bells the dread and dear unknown ;
Up fly bold monosyllables of power,
And claim to peal about the shining throne
That this bleak night and bleaker human state

Hide from our physical note. Yet, bravely peal ;
Sound faith, and if you will, sound love and hate,
Laughter from this low world, silver and steel.

How once these bells proclaimed the spirit of man,
When, though in kennelled alleys the lean forms
Of incurable disease and twisted mind
Multiplied, still that music topped the wind,
And aspiration soared in clanging storms
To prove the triumph of a desperate plan.

CARFAX

HERE'S the great skill of the race — and whither bound ?
This practical passion — well or ill employed ?
The hurt fly's brilliance whirring round and round ?
The urgent tendril grasping at the void ?
This force goes far — is force magnificence ?
This source, the springhead of what sort of sense ?
Meanwhile massed wheels obey their red-eyed God
And Logic, looking right, may cross the road.

A NATURE

To be assured of excellent happy things
By every sign that mortals may call sure,
To approach the margin of the sparkling springs
And even in kneeling there to find them not ;
Not once, but many times ; to seem secure
To the last instant, then with one grim shot
To find all juggled away — the common lot
This may be. Tantalus has many sons,

His daughters in a million mirrors stare ;
Yet one I knew who most of all seemed sent
Among earth's flowers for new-fulfilled content,
For whom illusion set snare after snare,
And hope most slyly budded, — and at once
The bloom, the song, were nothing and nowhere.
This soul so destined to such dead surprise
Has my deep pity, but not pity alone ;
Of all that live none walks with calmer eyes
To talk to the nesting bird in the brake, not one
Has found more kindness in the ' time of day '
Passed by the outcast. Still she holds her way.

TO ONE LONG DEAD

[Written on reading ' Harriet,' a novel by Elizabeth Jenkins, founded on the Penge Murder of 1877. Harriet, who was a little ' strange,' had some fortune. A scoundrel married her, got her money, and proceeded with the co-operation of his mistress and others to imprison and kill her and her baby by starvation]

If any compact might be made
With those who rule time, chance and sense,
I'd purchase it with all I had,
And choose my moment cool and glad
To climb that stair and get thee thence.

Some sixty years, and fewer miles,
And some uninformation should
Be overcome ; then like a flight
Of moonbeams instant, sure and right
I'd throng that room's cold stupid wood.

' Those ? Those I no more understand
Than you ; they are not of our kind.

They are not. Child, come forth, and bring
Thy child ; if singing help thee, sing,
For we will hasten down the wind.

‘ Hungry wast thou ? that pang is past ;
And thy clammed body ? now goes well ;
Hast lost thy silks ? here’s more as fine ;
Thy hair all knots ? the gold lights shine
As ever before that darkness fell.

‘ The clouds of the east like tulips bloom
To bless thee forth ; the moon in the west
Is lustrous with a joy in tears,
That thou hast slipt the barriers,
And bear’st thy boy on thy clear breast.

‘ Thou knew’st me when I came, didst thou ;
That pitchy dark hid not my soul,
Nor thy quick smiling awaking, nor
The childlike artful conqueror
That thou went’st forth past that grim shoal.

‘ My name ? I have no name, being only
Thy deep prayer come home to thee ;
Thyself art all thou now need’st frame
For thy sweet thinkings ; find a name
That grows in the grass or the apple-tree.

‘ And here’s the place ; thy wish, thy house,
Wide rooms prepared for him, for thee ;
Thou hast desired and been denied —

Here taste, roam, grace thy eastertide,
Here dream, and waking, here thou'lt be.'

If longings thus, like plans, can leap
Almost to that maimed Life, long stilled,
I hold some hope the Fates at length
As Beauty, Freedom, Faith and Strength
And Wisdom woke the unfrightened child.

A TOUCHSTONE

I THINK of Shelley, and my own poor speed
Becomes all glorious ; mute till then, I sing ;
His radiance is our modern angel's wing,
And if the choirs of heaven these days recede
Into bad silence, Shelley fills the sphere
With anthems heavenly clear.

Granted the discords of his youth ; the pace
Of youth's hot chariot is impolitic ;
And his gray hairs at thirty show the race
Of man, that cannot quite teach God a trick.
Possessions too, — part fungus, and part flower, —
Forced on him their half-power.

And grant his anguish of unmet desire,
' Shut out from Paradise ' ; O timely doom,
Before the round of days had robbed the bloom
From her he last believed a nature higher
Than all her kind ! This said, look where he stands,
And loose life's faded bands.

COUNTRY CONVERSATION

[*The Council for the Preservation of Rural England has published Dr. Vaughan Cornish's 'Scenery of England,' a volume which well sums up the necessity for unspoiled natural scenery and solitude, and the campaign for their maintenance*]

The Windmill : Well, I suppose I am soon to be dead and
done for ;

I'm a cracked, crazy, idle thing ; what do I face the
Sun for ?

I don't grind corn now, I don't swing my sails, and my
smock's half gone,

And the boards down below say this is the place to put
bungalows on.

The Lane : But what of me ? I'm older than you ; I'm a
doomed thing too.

There's a rumour that says I'm a nuisance to motorists ;
probably true.

I'm only a zigzagging lane, with wild-rose borders,
And a few little birds in the bushes. I'm waiting for
orders.

The Meadow : Waste not, want not. I fancied my chance
in the days of my pride.

I brought the little children here, whole sunny days
they wandered wide

Among my buttercups and mole-hills. I was their
home.

But what of that ? I'm to work. Promoted to Aero-
drome.

The Spirit of England : Children, mistake not yourselves.
Still glow to the morning ;

Wind between mullein and primrose ; accept May's
adorning ;
Deep your virtues. Life, not death, is yours,
Even as you are. Wisdom, vision this hour ensures
Through England from black Bolt Head to Hadrian's
Wall
That you shall still abound in the noblest use of all.

IN A LIBRARY

A CURIOUS remedy for present cares,
And yet as near a good one as I know ;
It is to scan the cares of long ago,
Which these brown bindings lodge.
In black print glares
The Elizabethan preacher, heaping shame
On that iniquitous gay hell, the stage ;
And here's another full of scriptural rage
Against high Rome. Fie, parson, be more tame.
This critic gnashes his laborious teeth
At that, whose subtlety seems no such matter ;
This merchant bodes our economic death,
This envoy hastens with his hard-won chatter ;
Age hacks at youth, youth paints the old town red —
And in the margin Doomsday rears his head.

AN OMINOUS VICTORIAN

I AM the *Poems* of the late *Eliza Cook*,
For sixty odd years I have graced this nook ;
I remember myself as a bright young book
On a bookseller's ormolu table.

Just beside me I had quite a nice friend,
Mrs. Hemans's Works, and at the far end
Was one called *It's Never Too Late to Mend*,
And a print of the Tower of Babel.

We were a pretty pair, *Mrs. H.* and I,
My crimson velvet was the best you could buy ;
She wore green — and a love of a tie, —
I suppose it would now look tawdry.

One fine morning she was taken, as I heard,
For a prize to a Miss Georgiana Bird.
Then my turn came — I'd to carry the word
Of ' Podgers, with love to Audrey.'

Some little time I was much in request,
Either she read me or hugged me to her breast,
And several sorts of ferns were pressed
Between my red-ruled pages.

O if only I could warn some of you young books,
Who are taken in like me by loving looks,
— There was no name then like *Eliza Cook's* ;
It's preparedness that assuages.

Then, one night (I can almost see it still)
A letter came ; she put down her quill,
And read, and stormed, ' I should like to kill
That two-faced miscreant Podgers ' ;

And she flung me under the settee, where
I lay in want of light and air,

Enduring the supercilious stare
Of the *Works of Samuel Rogers*

That always stood on the bracket — well,
There's not much really left to tell,
I was rescued by the housemaid Nell
Who hadn't no time for reading,

But on the whatnot made me do
For a lamp (of the horridest butcher-blue)
To stand on ; and she shrouded me, too,
In a mat of her mother's beading.

And here I am, and yet I suppose
I'd better not grumble, as this world goes,
For I see I'm outstaying rows and rows
Of the newest immortal fiction ;

And *Rogers* has vanished — I don't know where —
With his *Pleasures of Memory* — and I don't care ;
I presume he's propping the leg of a chair
With his sniffy elegant diction.

TO DR. I. LETTSOM

*On Receiving a Letter from him in the Shades, per J. J. A.,
his modern Biographer*

PHYSICIAN, from the blest abodes of light
Thy letter came ; our Lettsom still can write ;
O help a wretch with bibliomania smitten
To gather in what formerly thou'st written,

Those able Thoughts revived from publick Prints,
 Portraits of Quacks and universal Hints ;
 Direct my eye, my grasp, from stall to stall
 To thy Octavos, and among them all
 Let me discover with sublimer rage
 Thy bold inscription on one title-page.
 Perchance thy ownership of one ' of us,'
 Lamb's *Woodvil*, ev'n *Queen Mab* may come up thus,
 Or some of ABRAHAM'S earlier verse or prose, —
 Vain prayer ! Look on Elysian shelves for those,
 Where Lettsom yet some favourite volumes boasts,
 And shows 'em proudly to distinguished ghosts,
 And, while he still Sea-Bathing recommends,
 Prescribes good authors too, and even lends.

ARCADIAN LAW ; A NOTICE IN CHELTENHAM

BE prudent, husbandmen, and walk in awe ;
 Respect the rights of man, and hear the law :
 Visit fair Cheltenham, but amid your bliss
 Observe, confronting your contentment, this :
 Whoso shall not destroy most noxious Weeds,
 Against that swain th' indignant State proceeds ;
 The Thistle, Burdock, Ragwort, these by name
 The city fathers mark for serious blame,
 Growths, in whose making it can scarce be thought
 A wise Creator acted as he ought.
 And if your indolence should not agree,
 And you neglect to lacerate those three,
 Then from your pockets shall the law exact
 Immense amercement. You may not be racked.

THE MARCH OF MIND

IN ancient days, just before all that want of harmony
Between all right-minded people here and the others in
Germany
I knew a sound tough farming kind of a man who played
the accordeon
But otherwise resembled very nearly that famous figure in
Claudian,
The Peasant of Verona ; he never roamed ten miles
Beyond his walks with a shotgun, and didn't wear out
many stiles.
His greatest achievement was a tricycle, but it only
appeared
Once or twice a season, because the horses thought it
weird.
He did his work with considerable power, and he pulled
the third bell,
And there were rum goings on in London's West End, as
he had heard tell.
Now he can tell you a Delage is some car, and is really
tireless
At appreciating Brahms and Economics 'over the wire-
less,'
Has been twice to the Strand Palace, rousing his third
wife's suspicions,
And when he met me last offered to sell me four of my
first editions.

ORIENTAL TALE

THE library of Alexandria
Displeased the Caliph, as old authors say,

And in that city (this was long ago)
 Four thousand baths there were. Supplies were low
 Of fuel ; there had been a miners' strike,
 And the chief timber-merchant's name was Ike.
 But baths were popular ; all ranks agreed
 That baths, not books, were a great nation's need,
 And deputations brought the Caliph word,
 Either he'd give them baths or be interred.
 The Caliph scratched his favourite's head and sighed,
 ' Who can, for baths so many, heat provide ?
 Doth there in Alexandria's schools exist
 A truly calorific scientist ? '
 The lady looked into her glass and said
 ' In some ways it is time that you were dead,
 But on the whole I like you. Why not burn
 Those books you hate till better times return ? '
 ' Of course.' The Caliph rose to his full height,
 And swelled his chest, ' My very thought. Quite
 right.
 Let my Surveyor come.' He did, and soon,
 Like everything beneath the mocking moon,
 The library declined ; the poets went
 In bundles, a great littery event,
 To feed the furnaces ; their pages glowed,
 And bath attendants welcomed every Ode.
 Rewriters, novelists and mirth-provokers
 Provided much employment for the stokers ;
 In short, the city bathed for half a year
 At lowest cost. — What moral have we here ?
 We have the baths, we also have the books,
 Coal's very dear. To me it rather looks . . .

FABLE

FAR up a valley, next a quarry deep
Whence the white church you passed had been up-piled,
Where apple-boughs shadowed the nimble sheep,
There lived a man who still was largely child.
A hut much like a cave, a well, a wood
Were his inheritance and what he wanted.
Some skill of flower-wines got him clothes and food
At manor-house and mill ; enough was granted.

Listening as well he would to the bold songs
That come from any bush or reedy stream,
To silence too that speaks angelic tongues
From moon-skies and the sun's November gleam,
This man discovered in himself much pleasure
Of song and silence ; found he had some tune ;
And from the valley's music stole a measure
That danced between the blackthorn and the moon.

Happy this man, who with a flute unseen
Could descant to the choir of life and time,
And where in winter there was nothing green
Nor gay, but holly and a robin's rhyme,
Could call up summer, and again not summer
But a spirit from that dream whence summers fall.
Happy the storm-blown neighbour or chance-comer,
Who found this hut, this hearth, this madrigal.

But on a day, stirred by some wish to know
What this his power, if power it were, could rouse
In hearts unknown, this man made bold to go
Beyond the hill's broad bramble-tressy brows

Into the town ; where jostling at the inn,
And flushed with wine, occasion, whim or will,
Thinking besides to clarify the din,
He showed what songs were sung at Secrets Hill.

Not grudging, not delaying came the applause.
The spell seemed sure as ever ; ' why,' said one,
' This is the purest magic ; the man draws
His inspiration from no common tun.'
' I note the note that only masters wake,'
' In these low days at last we have the truth
Of our tradition, which had grown opake,
Restored to sparkling and triumphant youth.'

The man retreated full of these sweet words,
And with his save-all crammed with gifts as well ;
One gave a cage, — ' You must keep singing-birds,'
And one a pamphlet, ' Slumber or Rebel ?'
One pressed on him a favourite mezzotint
Of ' Lambs at Play,' with eyes of ' things unsaid' —
Six more gave invitations ; and by dint
Of thankfulness he found his home and bed.

Hardly awake again, he thinks he hears
The morning wind whistling through some cracked pane,
But soon unbolts his door ; at that appears
One who's not missed the mud along the lane.
' Pardon this early call ; but I you know
Am one of your admirers, and am sure
There must be many subjects for us two
To talk about, and — *thank* you ; yes please, four.

'I wanted you to listen to a set
Of melodies, and give me your opinion —
No one, not even my wife, has heard them yet,
And you will *feel* them. This one's Abyssinian.'
From his bulged pocket then the arrival drew
An instrument resembling a small skull,
And raised it to his lips, and blew, and blew. . . .
'Sweet was it not? The next I call Bul-Bul.'

After an age of this musician's charm,
The pensive cottager ventured to rise
With 'Sorry but I'm due at Blackboys Farm.'
'Yes, yes — But I've kept back my big surprise,
The finest thing that I have ever done.'
Our wretched hero sits again. . . . 'I knew
That you would comprehend, I think *this* one
Will startle even the journalistic crew.'

'We artists need each other's suffrages,
And I was in no doubt of *yours*; I'll bring
My compositions for you to express
Your further sanction of the way I sing.
No, *please* allow me to go back alone.'
The half-dazed audience willingly allowed,
And heard the clock strike two and nothing done.
He slunk to Blackboys and his head was bowed.

Here's a new evening and a golden calm.
Blue eyes above the gate: 'Do I intrude?
Singing like yours is the lone heart's best balm —
I wish to read you a short Interlude,

One of my own, in which I dramatize
Free love, — in fact, it's Tristram and Iseult, —
In the fifth act (and that's my grand surprise),
Tristram — but you shall hear. Scene I : A Vault. . .'

' " And so these lovers kissed in Avalon,
Weep not for them." Now how did you like that ?
Did you find the tryst in the greenwood overdone ? '
Our rustic would have answered even though flat
But she continued with transfixing gaze,
' You saw the mystical idea of course —
Not too distinct, as it were in a green haze, —
Roughly, my Tristram is the Sexual Force.

' I shall tell my publishers you share my view
That this poetic myth in the great tradition
Will please the million as it has pleased you,
And rescue Europe from an inhibition.'
The sunlight died ; and closing-time was near,
And all he had as those grim steps receded
Was his own music ; that too sounded sear,
And from the fountain-head it sank impeded.

But dawn, and western wind, and sonorous pine,
Starlight, and waterfall, and hollowing owl,
And humble-bee that sings where he will dine,
And every sprite that cries ' I love,' ' I prowl ' —
These took our solitary's heart anew,
And he among his sheds about his trade
Found his beloved song ; subtle and true
It rose afresh as though never to fade.

Yet who comes here to dog the Day of Rest ?
What means this van, and this unroping ? Speak.
' O, you're the lad I want ; quite a nice nest —
I've meant to come and see you all the week.
They tell me you're a judge of art, and so
I told the wife, though so far out, I'd come
To get your testimonial — let me show
You my Improved Self-Blown Harmonium.

' We've all had music in my family,
And I compose myself, and write the words,
Cantatas, jazz, all come the same to me,
And you should hear me mimicking wild birds ;
You shall — no charge, you'll have a concert free,
The better the day the better the deed. And when
You've heard the lot I hope that you'll agree
I've genius, both with the ivories and the pen.'

Farewell, improved and thunderous organist !
Long may our other singer be content
To fancy you in glories he has missed ;
Return, fair music, to your tenement.
But even in that blessed cool returning
Approaching wheels and brakes affright our friend,
Who with a drumming brain, and forehead burning
Perceived the Day of Rest was at an end.

' No, no ! we cannot go away without you ' —
How sweet is woman's voice at certain times, —
' I've read so much and heard so much about you, —
One day I'll send you some of my own rhymes —

But never mind a collar, come along,
We *want* you, and we've promised you'll be there ;
Don't you just *love* the country ? ' The last song
Of the loud blackbird took the lonely air

While the other wildfowl dizzily alighted
From the red car at the steps of the red Town Hall,
And scanned a poster : ' EVERYONE INVITED.
Chair taken by Sir HEARTY HANNIBAL ;
ELECTRIC BIRTH CONTROL : THE COMING
RACE.

Speakers include *Miss Delia Dishabille*,
A. Throat M.P., the *Reverend Cannock Chase*,
And (special) POET * * * * *¹ OF SECRETS HILL.'

¹ Smith.

AN ELEGY, AND OTHER POEMS

ELEGY

On His Majesty King George V

To face the fortune of a scowling time,
The omen and the rumour, we acclaimed
This quiet man proceeding in his prime ;
And his first triumph by foreboding maimed
Faded with little room for smile or sigh
When the world tempest plunged from that daemonic sky.

Recalling this, who does not picture still
Silent battalions, those who first deployed
And met the lightning on the crest of the hill —
Ironically went into the void ?
Yet Irony, corporal of Valour, stood
Aside when two men's names arose, and called them
good :

Kitchener dies not, his command endures ;
The King who heartened even that mighty heart
Stands with his marshal, and his gaze secures
The dead battalions. These no more shall part.
With men like those, the Leaders and the Led,
Who can descant of hate ? Who call their 'influence
dead ?

And who may school a king ? Might Machiavel
Now from his table-book communicate
Precept or paradox that could do well
In the nerve centres of a modern state ?
Better the sailor's plainness ; better still
The honest man's conviction, selflessness, good will.

An honest King's the noblest work of God —
Now passes one whom all the world termed so.
Some terrified the highest with their nod,
This Monarch held no subject high or low.
Whatever passion raged, it shall be known,
He but appeared or spoke : that storm was overblown.

Whatever Party claimed as right or wrong,
That he was wise and kind offended none ;
Therefore our love shall be his evensong ;
All dwellers in the dark and in the sun,
In the most populous, the most lonely places
Shall set a King among their old familiar faces.

PAST AND PRESENT ; A HYMN

Partly adapted from the Latin

THOSE spirits fallen too late in time
To share the holy, strong campaign
Which bade each stone cathedral climb
The sky, the wind and rain, —

Who may not watch their masons build
The roofs of gold, above the square
With plodding quarry-waggons filled,
Till seven counties stare, —

Those never-builders have their own
Enluminéd abbacies to raise,
And I have heard it needs no stone
For God to crown their days.

For them columnar trees ascend,
Large octagons, to lanterns bright ;
Transept and aisle as they intend
In divine dream unite.

The flight of one small song-wild lark
Finds heaven, their slenderest sunniest spire ;
And clouds where laughs the lightning-spark
Are their windows of gloom and fire.

But of their fanes my thought knows less
Than of their hymns which sounding thence
Like Sarum or like Chartres express
Hierologies immense ;

Which hour by hour, and year by year,
Announce in music the bold truth
That God of old was wont to hear
And Christ, immortal youth.

Foremost of all a matin hymn
From these soul-minsters leaps aloft
And while the ghostly lands undim
Thus summons mill and croft :

‘ Eternal Builder of the Whole,
Of times of times the giver,
That dost with nights and days control
And hearten all endeavour,

‘ O let day’s trumpeter now sound —
Sentry that spoke so right

‘ To wanderers through the unstarred profound,
And parted night from night.

‘ By him broad-wakened, morning’s star
Turns the thick mist to glass,
And Error’s pack that snarl and gnarr
At earth’s good creature, pass.

‘ To him the sailor gives What cheer ?
The calmer seas begin ;
Hearing this cock, the Church’s rock
Once knew and shed his sin.

‘ Then strenuous up rise we as well,
The cockerel bids from bed,
His bagpipes sings away each spell
That bound each dreaming head.

‘ When the cock crows, hope comes aboard,
And sick men rouse for life,
To fallen hearts comes faith restored,
While thieves put back the knife.

‘ Jesu, look on the lapséd love,
Gaze on us, gazing mend ;
At thy clear glance our faults remove,
In tears our defects end.

‘ O Light, appal sin’s muttering crew,
Command our new sense shine ;
Thine is our earliest anthem due
And our young prayers are thine.’

And while I hear, the dew-gray wood
Of Life gleams paradised ;
And nothing is but savours good,
And each soul's name is Christ ;

And every twine and flower and ray
And scale and shell and wing
Becomes an emblem quick which they,
Housing their God and King,

Will welcome to their living walls
And canopies of blue
And ether-circled capitals —
The old shall be the new.

A SECOND HYMN

TRAVERSING the early starlight, and the miles of shade,
Past the voice of the highroad, and the hurry of the
stream,
Hear the tolling hour ; its last echoes fade,
But the spirit is held by its deep-toned theme.

The spirit knows that strange familiar appeal
Made by far generations at the onset of night ;
And as the dew on the cheek, so the ghost-hymns feel,
Which thus had language once, if I guess them right :

' O God and Creator of beings every one,
Helmsman of the firmament, thou that dost dress
Day with the regality of the sun,
Night with sleep's kindliness,

‘ And dost so, that the silent time may restore
The drowsy limbs for labour’s due return,
Unburden the mind of the pack it bore,
Free awhile those that mourn,—

‘ Now, day’s course being run, our thanks thereon,
And, night waylaying all, thereat our prayers
We utter ; hold us pardoned for evil done.
This hymn our best declares.

‘ Thee let our souls’ profoundest concent
And thee let our voices in music avow.
Thee let our love seek out, pure and intent,
To thee our calm thought bow.

‘ So when day is wrapped in the prisoning pall,
The eyeless world of night, none feel dismay ;
Faith shall not see that shadowy wall,
Night shall be faith’s broad day.

‘ Suffer not the mind to sleep a heavy sleep,
Though fault now learn to pillow his head ;
Let faith by the dreamer stand and keep
Hot malease from that bed.

‘ With the sense’s grossness purged and doffed,
Come thou and be the true heart’s dream ;
Ghostly enemies prowl where sleep breathes soft ;
Great angel, scatter them.’

The goblin cloud runs between the moon and the mill,
The moon’s dying fire leaves a lonelier road,

Such voices as there are rise startling and shrill,
And my heart needs a hymn by the sombre wood ;

But where the illuminate town with its trumpets of light
Challenges the dark, and skill gone wrong
Would circumvent God, there most fear Night,
Amid that sneering blaze trust an ancient song.

WOE TO DRUNKARDS

A Jacobean Sermon ¹

WHAT is the world about ?
Are my two eyes put out ?
Watchman, ascend or scout,
Lift up your voice and shout
Woe to drunkards !

See how the ugly vice,
That stinging Cockatrice,
Once thought a bird of night
Now in the high noon's light
Flings through the market-place ;
Watchman, amend your pace,
Cry as you hope for grace,
Woe to drunkards !

You from the ale-bench there,
You with the bleary stare,
Fiery-beaked, thick-eared,
You I take by the beard —

¹ Suggested by one preached by Samuel Ward, B.D., of Ipswich, 1635.

Brutish with card and cup,
We can scarce raise you up,
But from the devil's dye
I'll scour you by and by
With my scab-cleansing cry,
Woe to drunkards !

Elf of old Lucifer,
Self-executioner,
Mule — yet I have here a spur
Shall make you shake and stir,
Gaze on the Theater
Where beyond all demur
God's vengeance aver,
Woe to drunkards !

Kes-grave's a place you've seen,
There were three serving-men
Leaving the alehouse, when
Old Joan cried ' Stay awhile,
Here's that shall make you smile,'
Coming with pot again ;
Never spoke more.
Never recovered speech
(Do I begin to teach ?)
Sickened and three days past
Old Joan had breathed her last,
Paid the full score.

One night at Barnwell *Plough*
Several did swear and vow,
Lusty boys too, to clear

One barrel of strong beer ;
That they did, three of four
Died the next day.
This I tell certain sure,
Scan you this paper o'er
Signed by the Justice near ;
That quelled the play.

Think too at Haslingfield,
How once the butcher swelled
Both with his drink and pride,
Scoffed at the minister ;
Something then stuck inside,
Quackled him, so he died.
What a dear drink was there !
Over at Bromeswell too
(Which I know to be true)
There was a miller who
Came home disguised ;
Spite of his wife's advice,
Stung by the Cockatrice,
By Old Nick advised,
In's old millpond would swim :
That was the end of him,
Ralph could not reach the brim ;
Friend, be apprised.

In London some time back,
Swilling canary sack,
One desperate villain got
Hold on a pottle-pot,
Swears a deep oath

And sets pot to mouth
And once again moistens his ratsbany drouth;
When he had done,
Was no more for the sun,
Irrecoverably dead —
Pray, sir, how's your head ?

God sometimes, furious,
Finding most serious
This sin of drunkenness
Suddenly practises
Present and Martial Law.
That once again we saw.
One too vainglorious,
A Knight notorious
For these wet monsterings
Shall tell his tale.
See where he roars it out,
Ghost speech what man can doubt ?
' Once I would bear about
Drink in a pail,
Drink for my reapers and
Labourers about the land,
Plied them with my own hand,
Till not a one could stand —
But on a time,
Drinking in company
Comes a strange lass to me,
" This is for you," quoth she,
Giving a ring where I
Muzzy as I was could spy
Graven a rhyme.

Drink and die.

So, pass round the rosy,
I wore ring and posy,
One short week after it,
I proved what there was writ,
Suddenly sinking, and shrivelling and shrink-
ing,
Through dicing and drinking.
Adieu.'

More could I speak
Of parties so punished,
And keep you a week,
But these may suffice.
You stare as astonished,
Your frenzy's diminished,
Be further admonished,
For certes I have not finished
Nor yet has your vice.

You dally and play
Day after day
And think such mischances
As fall on the rest
Are not in your way.
But, dreamer, 'twere best
That you left these mad dances.
Your own dispensation
May miss approbation.
Bouse on, till at length
The Red Dragon seize ye and show you his
strength,

In his den to be thrall,
Drunk with scorpions' gall,
And (strange taste for you)
To yell and to bawl
For one drop of water,
So small a refreshing,
So simple a liquor
— Should have called for it quicker —
Will the Brimstone Lake do ?
Then writhe and howl wishing
For kindlier slaughter.

Or let me allay
That drought while I may,
Desist friend to pot it,
And wine it and sot it,
There's a toad in the flagon,
And that toad's a dragon,
No *Borgia* yet
Pretended to whet
The sons of the Buttery,
Blind in their sluttery,
With such an infusion,
Murderous conclusion.
How clear flows the brew,
How it shines in the pouring,
That yet needs exploring ;
Friend, scan it anew ;
Is there nothing amiss there ?
No ominous kiss there ?
Friend, look through and through.
Think not that my pleasure

Is thundering out hell
Against drunkards ; my leisure
I value too well ;
But when there's no amulet
Nor antidote found as yet
Save what the servant
Of Christ can provide,
Let me be fervent.
Time serves, and tide.

My sovereign medicine
Quickly, O man, get in ;
Now, very now begin.
Salve the great sore.
Others from such a sin
Rose up before.
One such is in my mind,
Drunkenness made him blind,
Who even then could find
 Spiritual sight ;
Be then by me inclined,
 Come and drink right.

Here, to my inn repair,
See its bright sign in air,
The Brazen Serpent or
Sweet Shady Rock ;
Hasten here in-a-door,
Though by past pranks grown poor,
For your old husks and swill
Hanker you never will
Once the kind vintner here

Answers your knock.
No penny in your purse
Elsewhere ensures a curse,
Here without money buy
Water of life, come try
Delicatest pomegranate,
Never was such a vat,
Frankly imparted ; come,
Come and be overcome.

You who pass by,
Think not I only aim
Truth at this brute grown tame,
You too I bid descry
What to ignore were blame —
The fatal Serpent nigh.
Stand, by Saint Chrysostom,
Take my intention home.
See what a stabling hath
This Serpent in your path,
Burrows and nests and dens
In every alley,
Alehouse on alehouse whence
Pest and night sally ;
Talk you of draining fens ?
While these superfluous
Puddles most poisonous
Daily are drowning us ?

Magistrates, hark to me,
Gentry and Yeomanry,
Dare I add Royalty ?

Consider seriously.
Make bold experiment,
Join the Omnipotent,
With noble example
The Basilisk trample ;
And think we rude Countrymen
Only take courage when
Great persons lead.
Show but the Court a shape,
Hodge will still be its Ape ;
Then set your faces
Against the false graces
Of healths by the gallon,
Or England is fallen.
Thus ending I grieve you
But to relieve you ;
From the asp to retrieve you ;
As some would say, shrieve you ;
Pray Heaven reprieve you
Woe to Drunkards.

THE SUBTLE CALM

SEAS like Roman glass,
Where their prow advances,
Spread a tinted shell ;
They in wonder pass
As a white moth dances
Over a woodland well.

On the ship's rail leans
Every tattered sailor,

Caught in this decoy,
Querying what this means, —
Child of late-gone gale, or
Amphitrite's joy.

Night's a heavy veil,
Silent, close, a stranger.
Watch you well ; for now
Each gray ocean tale
Rises into danger
From the calm below,

Which, as porcelain firm,
Seems the probable gladway
For some shining shape,
Winged, or wyvern worm,
Coiling your dull tradeway,
Baffling all escape.

A CITY ON A HILL

WE climbed the hill and passed the mill,
And loved its grumbling working song,
And on the height with great delight
We found our guesswork led not wrong,
For there, in the high air,
Dominating everywhere,
We met the walls the Roman host
Used for their *Kommandantur* post ;
And swore their pioneers had made
Stable and archway still in trade.

A fountain running in the sun,
Though sleepy, seemed as if it poured
Long centuries since, to scour and rinse,
While scandal winked and gossip roared ;
And vast by its mouths passed
The stallions Nature grandly cast
To beat the clay of plains far down
And tug tons up to the eyrie town, —
With drovers whose absurd gruff curse
Horses have known since the first horse.

Men here like mushrooms in the hush
Of vaporous night might be supposed
To grow and spring ; to haunt and cling
To this one ground, whatever closed
Of strange power, or time-change,
Seizing tavern, quern and grange ;
Like stone setts in the market square,
After the ran-tan they'd be there,
Insisting that the world was theirs,
A world of church-bells, vats and mares.

This world so petty challenged yet
(And so we saw) some roods of land.
Look out of nights, the farther lights
Were a hundred miles on every hand ;
And we too, become free,
Consorting with this high degree,
Floating above the wheaten plain,
In Louis' or in Carausius' reign,
Declar'd the hill's least flint or heath
Was magic and had baffled death.

THE SPELL OF FRANCE

LITTLE enough of that wide country
Though fascinated long
Have I as yet acquired : that little
Is constant undersong,
Astonishment, rest, recognition,
In my life's round ;
And whether I will or no my silence
Reverts to that bright ground.

First, was it ? from the verse of poets
Who intimate and shy
Unveiled the squares, the fairs, the lovers
Under that calm blue sky,
I thought I won some understanding
Of the different lure
And look and consonance of life there,
— And those first dreams endure.

Thereafter, currented with million others
To history's roaring weirs,
I still found moments, and lacked not feelings,
Some hours of smiles or tears,
To taste the elixir of that country,
To kiss the garment's hem,
And, hurled away no matter how fiercely,
To hoard more than one gem.

Thus now it comes, and from blest occasion
Of later date though brief,
That some deep music from that country
Shakes me like a leaf,

And the happy storm of dreams or pictures
 Origin'd there
Will occupy my whole existence
 And seem my native air.

What else would you, could I? Endeavour
 To number and right-dress
The outward tokens of this passion
 Would be but foolishness :
To name (though sweet the names) each city,
 And village of that dream,
Each woodride, each château, each rampart,
 Quarry and cliff and stream ;

To summon up lost children's laughter,
 And farmers' terse good talks,
Cassock and sermon in gaunt cool churches,
 Golden past-harvest walks,
Dry veterans garrulous at small tables,
 Bugles and horns and bells —
How might I by these hints create you
 Lord of my spell of spells ?

LATE LIGHT

COME to me where the swelling wind assails the wood
 with a sea-like roar,
While the yellow west is still afire ; come borne by
 the wind up the hillside track ;
There is quiet yet, and brightness more
Than day's clear fountains to noon rayed back
 If you will come ;

If you will come, and against this fall
Of leaves and light and what seemed time,
Now changed to haste, against them all
Glow, calm and young ; O help me climb
Above the entangling phantoms harrying
Shaken ripeness, unsighted prime ;
Come unwithering and unvarying —
Tell claw-handed Decline to scrawl
A million menaces on the wall
For whom it will ; while safe we two
Move where no knife-gust ever blew,
And no boughs crack, and no bells toll,
Through the tempest's ominous interval,
Penitential low recall.

PERSONAL SURVIVALS

THE ages of the men whose path met mine
Seldom aroused my question ; what I sought
And found in them was of a different sign
Than Time may recognize : the native thought,
The character, the self, the singular gift,
Whatever names a man more than his name.
Gray hair or golden did not change my drift,
All seemed of youth ; their years might be the same.
Not date, but quality — that zest is strong,
Though Time has played his jokes and will play more,
Protesting this white hope has stayed too long,
Marching Narcissus off at seventy-four,
Varying the scope of all, while slow night falls —
Whom still I see, shining originals.

WRITING A SKETCH OF A FORGOTTEN POET

HERE this great summer day,
While the fields are wild
With flowers you name, I stay,
And have learnedly compiled

From shaky books, too few,
Dry registers,
Something of the living you ;
And have gleaned your verse.

You might have laughed to see,
With this rich sun,
One pent in a library
Who else might run

Free in the flashing sweet
Life-lavishing air.
Or, lover of books, you'd greet
Such constancy and care.

You might have laughed to hear
Your stanzas read —
If it were not so clear
The dead are dead.

What gulfs between us lie !
I had thought them crossed,
Dreaming to gratify
Your unimpatient ghost.

AT CHRIST CHURCH, GREYFRIARS

In memory of Charles Lamb

who for seven years heard the Bible read every day there

AMONG all houses in haunted London
Behind whose windows we still perceive
Faces and passions of mortal genius
And, pausing, half rejoice, half grieve,
Is there one so kindly, one so lovely
As Christ's-house here with its constant dream
Of Christ-boys in their pretty myriads,
And one above all where he follows the gleam ?

Here Time has served his mysterious Master
Much as in other matters : the race
Of boys are sped through youth and manhood.
Gone, 'all are gone.' But in this place
The impartial shadow has shown some weakness,
And seems inclined to hoard like toys
An aspect, an echo in gentle remembrance
Of numberless nameless blue-coat boys.

One above all, and Time still names him,
Has found Time's sergentry less severe,
And holds his boyish world for ever
Singing and listening to music here, —
The music not solely of the musicians,
But of primal story, wisdom divine :
Here Lamb the child sits in rapture, the song being
Eden and Patmos and Adam's line.

Here in such form as the speech of England
Shapes how truly to deepest truth,

Elia in Tudor gown and girdle
Spies near as home the paths of Ruth,
The palace of Solomon, Job disastered,
Angels descending, fishers of men ;
Thrilled with these visions, that fade in music,
Goes forth an enchanted citizen.

Come, child of elder fancy, man
Of child-like innocence ; recall
The glances bright and voices of morning,
The opening paradise. Fair fall
The blessing on your lingering spirit,
And when no other is in the place,
We know that you, dear solitary,
Here see your Master face to face.

NEAR SUNSET

WHO has not found the landscape of his being,
In certain clearances of thought and need,
Deflections too of incubus, serene
Spiritual weather wild in its very calmness ;
Who has not lifted his eyes to the hills, and now
Discovered them most personal, simple, attractive,
Asserting final grace, perpetual cause
For that way taken ? Come again, sweet ray,
Cloud-shot, and lull the winds, and gild the spires,
Light up those nameless hills, create in them
The power to bless with countenances of strength
One whom the day's hot labour did not spare.

THE AMBUSH

IN human paths, delightful as they show,
With dewy sunny may ablow
Or wild rose scenting,
Where the unwary and the joyous go,
The day brings forth a fever, hides a foe
Whose slow dementing,
Not less fierce for being so slow,
Defies accenting.

Strangest of nature's works, to leave fresh grace
And hope and bud of happy race
And love forth setting
Thus at the mercy of a silent chase,
An ambushed utter thing without a face,
A death begetting
On bright strength a defiled death-case.
Strangest abetting !

POETRY'S INVITATION

IN happy hours, some hours, I spring ;
From dense unhappiness I sing ;
I dance up like a meadow lark
Just where you thought there was never a thing.
I am not to be snared or trapped,
Spied out, astronomised or mapped,
And though you marked my last arising,
My next shall be as quick-surprising ;
Love me not —
My love you have got ;
And hunt me fast —
I flitted past ;

I know no date, but where I play
It is perpetual proud to-day.
My wine is flashed in any cup
That takes my eye, flower-bell or pitcher ;
Now some roisterer holds it up
And now the singing hedger and ditcher.
Told I more, you chance would dream
I meant to help you how to find me, —
Hear then : this my note, my gleam,
And there your wit, will, strength and scheme —
Come, bind me !

AND THEN

INCONSTANCY, too rarely
The theme of verse, a verse to you ;
Some say you deal unfairly
With human nerves ; it is not true.
Lit by you and left by you I like my journey hitherto,
And still in a flash you may convince me I am waking
long years since ;
I wish your sun, I wish your rain
Dart elfish over the years that yet remain.
— This would be song for winds to sing
If I knew all ;
But while I listened the thrush took wing,
The bell fell silent,
My own footfall
Sounded alone, that face was gone
To whom I turned to make it known.
But still Inconstancy knows best, and the sudden turn
of the lane is spring.

FROM THE BRANCH LINE

BRIGHTEST of red roofs, glittering
In a sharp-rayed evening,
On as green a hillside
As ever I saw in life or painting,
Crofts with fingers or sprigs more eager
Than spring yet showed me,
And over,
A spire like a lily
To unfold in secret :
My happy fortune
Is to be driven onward,
And no expectation
Of returning, — a byeway,
A millstream ; never
To commute that jewel,
To commonplace the glory.
Of the sunset mansions
Whereto like an apostle
Up the sandy road
I see (if we must use such terms)
The curé plodding.

' A MUSIQUE, SOLDIER '

PERHAPS no greater wonder than
I find about me ever can
Befall the living or dead man ;

And that I cannot tell it out
Makes it not more a thing to doubt
Than if I were this gale, to shout

Among the swirling leaves and bare
Claws of old trees, that fight with air,
Their friend and foe ; than if I were

The black sky powerful miles on miles
Which, spite of some defiant isles
Of brilliance, still destroys the smiles

Of multitudes that, given the sun,
Most gallantly career and run ;
Just now, the storm is but begun

Which terribly transforms the year
And bids those minions disappear,
Down-slashing, vast, direct, severe.

How kind, to those who know the coast,
This wintry steely furrow-ghost —
But that's the thing lacks language most.

IN MY TIME

TOUCHED with a certain silver light
In each man's retrospection,
There are important hours ; some others
Seem to grow kingfisher's feathers,
Or glow like sunflowers ; my affection
In the first kind finds more delight.

I would not challenge you to discover
Finally why you dwell
In this ward or that of your experience.

Men may vary without variance.
Each vase knows the note, the bell,
Which thrills it like a lover.

When I am silent, when a distance
Dims my response, forgive ;
Accept that when the past has beckoned,
There is no help ; all else comes second ;
Agree, the way to live
Is not to dissect existence.

All the more waive common reason
If the passion when revealed
Seem of poor blood ; if the silver hour
Be nothing but an uncouth, shot-torn tower,
And a column crossing a field,
Bowed men, to a dead horizon.

CABARET TUNE

I CAN'T go back to Then.

You can't go *back* to Then.

And I wish I might ; but do I wish right ?

Where really shines that alluring light

Which from Now would decoy to Then ?

I have gained so much since Then.

You have gained so much since Then.

Would that bloom on the wheat, if one might retreat,

Be worth the rest ? would the fresh dawn-sweet

Encounter justify Then ?

God knows, Now would always be Then.

God *knows*, Now would always be Then.
The flash of the brook and the life of the look
And the scent of the may and the charm of the book
Move for ever between Now and Then.

TOWN END

THE moon seems creeping with retarded pace
Among the web of clouds inert and black.
The night stands still ; the air falls soft and slack,
And no sweet whisper tells that this day's grace
Wooed the lithe lark to his forgotten place
Above the field path and the herd's slow track
To sing as if the heart of the gods would crack
Should he omit one syllable of the case.

This nebula of night yet has some sound
Heard by some idle vigilant like me,
To stir a thought or two. The owls whoop round,
' You have yet to banish us. You have left one tree.'
And the last train's whistle calls pale, slant, absurd,
That some must hear as their life's mocking-bird.

AN INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL MATCH

SOME time the English name in sport was good,
The rigour of the game was the clear way.
The other player, it was understood,
Was as yourself, however went the day.
No poisoned mood lurked then for chance to strike.
From generous greatheart sprang the invitation

To meet in sunny hour and strive alike
And settle friendly odds in recreation.

Look where that shining name begins to fade.
Hear how, before the sport we preached and blessed
Is planned anew, each snarling retrograde
Prepares his malice for the coming guest.
Men cannot shoot a goal or jump a hurdle
Without a psychologic gas attack.
Strange that the milk of kindness here should curdle,
And English hands maul one white record black.

MINORITY REPORT

THAT you have given us others endless means
To modify the dreariness of living,
Machines which even change men to machines ;
That you have been most honourable in giving ;
That thanks to you we roar through space at speed
Past dreams of wisest science not long since,
And listen in to news we hardly need,
And rumours which might make Horatius wince,
Of modes of sudden death devised by you,
And promising protection against those —
All this and more I know, and what is due
Of praise would offer, couched more fitly in prose.
But such incompetence and such caprice
Clog human nature that, for all your kindness,
Some shun loud-speakers as uncertain peace,
And fear flood-lighting is a form of blindness ;
The televisionary world to come,
The petrol-driven world already made,

Appear not to afford these types a crumb
Of comfort. You will win ; be not dismayed.
Let those pursue their fantasy, and press
For obsolete illusion, let them seek
Mere moonlight in the last green loneliness ;
Your van will be arriving there next week.

ANTI-BASILISK

BUT for a Basilisk who somewhere cowers
Camouflaged under artful shade,
Our siege would prosper ; we have guns enough,
Valour enough, and seldom sleep.
Still, when a Basilisk is on their side,
It makes some difference. That unnatural eye
Poisons our knighthood, drops our petals dead,
Yet nothing seen of outward wound or scathe.
Nor, though our best observers dawn to dusk
Explore the city walls from rick and ridge,
Can we discover in what casemate squats
The Basilisk : which, so, might be impossible,
Since he who meets that look, that silent line
Of death, must join the rest of our poor lads
For whom the chaplain opens his prayer-book now.
It must be otherwise contrived.
So, gentlemen, after prolonged discussion
With all our centenarians, I resolve
As follows : At midnight to-night
Between our foremost works and those proud walls,
The Royal Engineers and special troops
Will hoist, lift, raise and generally erect
A turret ; on that turret they will fix

One mirror (now arriving from the Base),
 Confronting with its large and lustrous round
 The Basilisk where he, perhaps, is found.
 It is a perfect stratagem — we hope ;
 Let people hang themselves with their own rope.
 The theory we are working on is this ;
 Basilisk eyes the glass. The glass at once
 Shoots back his baleful stare. It cannot miss.
 He dies self-poisoned. What? No, no, good dunce ;
 Here's someone asking if a Basilisk
 Has some precaution against such a risk ;
 Well, gentlemen, to dinner, or to horse —
 At sunrise we shall take the town, of course.

FRESH THOUGHTS ON AN OLD POEM

About ben Adhem — may his tribe increase ! — LEIGH HUNT

WITH old Abou ben Adhem dwells the light,
 Life's fleur-de-lis is still what he chose then.
 His Angel longs to range the world to-night,
 Numbering the host that ' love their fellow-men.'

Be strong, be proud, be princely in your time,
 New age of men and women ; but beware
 Of compromising with the giant crime
 Whose grossness is the death of all things fair.

In not one syllable, one gesture swell
 The swarm whose greeds, all-coloured, work one
 way.

Marshal your quiet power aloof. Repel
 Their passion with wise patience ; see fair play.

Unveil the shrill cold puppetry they invent,
Perceive their spurious action ; find the true.
Friendship knows little of frontier and descent ;
Share noonday toil, and Peace shall come with the
dew.

PRESENT DISCONTENTS

SEEKING no more
The auguries of to-morrow's peace or war,
I can think only of to-day in terms
That no ' great journal ' ridicules or confirms.
This sky and earth
In my impression certainly seem worth
Some hours of my concern, and maybe yours ;
Rooks, peewits, herons I consult to-day,
If I can find them in the glades and moors,
And if they have some truths to flash my way.
Should they say no,
I do not doubt some coral-berried tree,
Slenderest and finest she where many grow,
Will well contrive to catch me suddenly.

And mark that tower
High on the ridge, cool-lighted and austere ;
As if I never before imagined power,
His quiet domination fills me here,
While long, long centuries throng my tiny hour,
And the lark cries to the sun — in this or any year.

THE SPIRE

THE moment holds me ; pale cool fire
Signals the beauty of that swift spire

Which ever declares that man's desire
Is godly, gracious ; in that stone
So lily-light and so alone
I see him shining with his truth.

But then I come new-taught by youth,
Fresh from the voices and looks and gleams
Of boys with generous plans, great dreams,
Whose presence is a gospel ; and I stare
Up to that glowing triumph and find there
Rather the vision of their young high-serious
Choice of this life than signs mysterious ;
That light, that heavenly stem
I owe to them.

‘ CAN YOU REMEMBER ? ’

YES, I still remember
The whole thing in a way ;
Edge and exactitude
Depend on the day.

Of all that prodigious scene
There seems scanty loss,
Though mists mainly float and screen
Canal, spire and fosse ;

Though commonly I fail to name
That once obvious Hill,
And where we went and whence we came
To be killed, or kill.

Those mists are spiritual
And luminous-obscure,
Evolved of countless circumstance
Of which I am sure ;

Of which, at the instance
Of sound, smell, change and stir,
New-old shapes for ever
Intensely recur.

And some are sparkling, laughing, singing,
Young, heroic, mild ;
And some incurable, twisted,
Shrieking, dumb, defiled.

RUE DES BERCEAUX

GLIDE beneath those elms, lost lane,
Run away from forge and inn,
Seek the wide wheat-blazing plain,
Cross silvering brook and climb to win
The hilltop with the far view
Of spire and chimney, wood and lake,
And, sweet lane, take me with you,
We'll start ere summer morning break,
Or when the winter pours amain
His dark slashing rain.

Never in this world again,
Nameless byeway, shall we go
Shyly through the popped grain,
Where the young stream sang below ;
And hardly may I tell now
How much of you my fancy maps,

And if the sign would still show
The place you made for once perhaps ;
I thought I knew you, but the brain
Fights dream-time in vain.

Quit those puzzled streets, that slain
Church of shattered saints, cleft tombs,
Take me with you, kindly lane,
Freed from those close walls and glooms —
But what have you to haste for ?
The new bells chime, the new roofs glow,
And ghosts of an extinct war
Would scarcely find a stone they'd know ;
I dare this much : they'd bear some pain
Your strange grace to gain.

NIGHTS BEFORE BATTLE

MOVING through those nights
Of sad immense unknowingness,
Led by dodging lights
Of pale disordered power,
Men through gulfs and heights
Of outward fact and inward, press
Towards the centre of their fate,
The phantom top and tower.

Never was a Folly
So built, so conjured ; they would force
Mule-train, truck and trolley,
Wear their young bones sore
To lift fierce Melancholy

Into the skies, that rained of course
Interminable objections to
This thundering at God's door.

NEARING THE ANCRE BATTLEFIELD, 1916

THE leafiest trees we ever saw,
The most refreshful shadow they
Had ever cast on a hot highway,
The only houses without flaw ;
Life's look, a final look, all pure
To venturing boy or man mature ;
But then, the loneliness, that shroud
Which, more than pack and gun, kept bowed
And isolated all our crowd !
For from no step nor window here
Woman's wit chose cavalier,
And never from the smithy rang
The shoemaker's fiery friendly clang,
Nor under eaves nor under oak
A labourer sat to snore or smoke ;
All was so natural, up to here,
That these negations hardly proved
We came into the land of fear ;
And slowly on the column moved.

I see the blue-white finger-post
Pointing to places five miles off,
Names that might make all Hades laugh,
Accessible as Banquo's ghost.
A mile away — perhaps alive
We'd get that far that night ; but five !

The moment stays ; the twisted gate,
The well, the château wall ;
And one green tree, profuse, elate,
Still canopies the moment great
With nothing or with all.

MARCHING BACK TO PEACE, 1916

How came such minutes, such inimitables
To lose their oneness ? Was the sun so lazy,
The night so somnolent ? The world so hazy ?
Revive yourself, friend Willingness ; find chronicles
For every form and organism we passed
That winter morning — none could go unglassed
In consciousness so ready, so released ;
Or were you all as folk who flock to a feast
Whom expectation makes unable
To view more than the silver-selfish table ?
But all was banquet then,
Even granite pavement paining the dim tread
Had glory in it, that the foot pained was not dead,
That those about, behind, before, were men —
How long ? But did we pose, and did we deal
With that bleak query, short and stinging ?
So, strike up, band, and clamorously conceal
That road, that new-found light ; we are safer singing.

ON A PICTURE BY DÜRER

Sonnenuntergang

WHERE found you, Dürer, that strange group of trees,
That seared, shamed, mutilated group still standing

To tell us *This is War* : where found you these ?
I did not guess, when last I saw shells landing
Smash on the track beside, how old they were.
They had been good tall pines, I saw, but not
Of such great bole as argued they stood there
When your antiquity might pass the spot.

A thousand of us who as yet survive
From what was modern war the other day
Could recognize them, killed in the great Drive
Which strewed so many bones in glory's way.
But, you, your date was wrong. From which of your
towers
Saw you that night across the centuries,
Under that cloud with baleful eye-slits, ours —
Our sign, our shape, our dumb but eloquent trees ?

MONTS DE FLANDRE

WHEN you were young, you saw this puzzling scene :—
There a deep plain spread, where a sudden flash
And sulky thunderous boom, or a storm of these,
Declared the war that trenched and tunnelled there.

Perhaps you had dragged your limbs from the painful
centre
Of this denatured gunland, and had left
Something much like yourself in a shroud blanket
Next men who still cleaned rifles, stood to arms.

Then you had climbed clear of that solemn waste
Up the firm hill, the bastion of dear life,

And when the redeeming road had risen enough
You could believe you had been lucky again.
So, marching on, or jolted in a waggon,
The last explosion gone, like famine rescued
You ravined down the circumstance of peace
In the highland, every hovel, beck and bush.
How wonderful that line 'tween heaven and hell !
Was this a shrine ? then why should you not kneel ?

But wise are those, who, no such contrast needed,
To-day perceive that on those wooded hills
Something primeval and perennial waits,
And someone sings of an immortal chance.
Wise are the later lovers of those hills :
They will forgive war's ghosts, who also loved.

THE INACCESSIBLE HOUSE

No one will ever be living in that tall house,
No face gleam from those windows ; never.
I am bound to go past, and go I must a ghost,
Never leaving the path, to tread the lawn,
Daring not miss the bridge with the boat in the reeds —
My sole permitted track. Blue turrets torn,
Old warning fingers, atop the grove, repel.
With any stone I might set whirring round
The vane ; and yet the vane keeps mighty still,
While here through these lean trees a wind wakes up
And rain flashes white fury. Here the rain
And wind and I have power ; that house is strange.
My ghost and I are kept to one thin road.
Were I blindfolded, and pitch darkness fallen,

From this our track I must still see the house
Forbidden, in its silence, every sill,
Stone, statue, deadly, terrible in defeat.

RECURRENCE

FAIL me not, flying angel, when I come
To the great bend in the road, the hill's descent
Through ten thousand trees ; O be not dumb
But with your glorious shout, that with me went
Invincible that way, amaze afresh
A wanderer, magnify those glittering drops
Of cold quick rainstorm challenging tired flesh,
Until all enmity and difference stops,
And I am strong with them. Fail not at all
When past those grieving trees the fated road
Sinks into swamps where half a yard of wall
Pretends man lived here once who stacked and sowed ;
And from that wayless saeculum of despond
O, will you lift to the flashing heights beyond ?

TELL YOUR FORTUNE

(Written for the reunion of the Southdown Battalions, 1936)

THIS was my pleasant dream, not ten days past :—
Another War had broken out at last ;
But not the kind of War that H. G. Wells
Or many another jovial scribe foretells,
Nor altogether like our own affair,
And yet it had a drift that took me there.

I found myself still groping up our road
Through *Festubert*. The Verey lights still glowed

Thin green on the eastern skyline, and I saw
The *Brewery* ruin again, and felt like straw ;
But then the night that had mantled dank and raw
Became blue summer morning, and I found
Some Southdowns sauntering in a meadow ground,
Thistled and ragged, but a fairy place,
And I knew many a voice, and many a face —
And by the road a garden, that had been
Shelled once, was a startling miracle of green,
And half-wild trees and bushes by the gate
Bore such rich fruit, so thronged, so bloomed, so
great

That I could hardly tell myself this way
Led to *Canadian Orchard* ! Fain to stay,
Yet on I went, as dreamers must ; at length
I met the old Battalions in main strength,
And they were holding the *Old German Line*.

— Bless me, that was no trouble. Wit and wine
Were hurrying round, — there stood a vast marquee
Where all could get lobster or chicken free,
And sergeant-majors playing harps invited
All ranks to drink, and dance and feed. — ‘ Delighted ! ’
Commanding officers came tripping neatly,
The G.O.C. took wine and warbled sweetly,
The sun shone golden on this brotherhood,
And Quartermasters sighed ‘ I will be good.’
Mules at the transport lines across the way
Expressed harmonious thanks for purple hay,
And scores of angels, fluttering through our ranks,
Placed in each honest paw ten thousand francs.

Alas, I woke ; but then it struck me, This
Was not a mere imaginary bliss :
It was a forecast of this annual *Do*,
And here you are, to prove my vision true.

NOT SO DEAD

How old I grow, how out of date,
A man who once went gleaning,
A child who took, as who did not ?
His broken hoop to the blacksmith, got
Sweet meals of locust from the trows
Of sheep and passing the mill with those
Saw the sails roll round so gaunt and great,
And caught the country's meaning !

But say no more : there's plenty yet
To hide the change ; come out and set
Some plants with Uncle Droll who knew
Your father and grandfather too,
And still believes we dead shall rise
With all our limbs, and sparkling eyes.

A TUNE

AND the bees of Dalham in the bramble-flowers
And the chimes of Dalham in the heart of hours,
And the lass of Dalham in the April showers —
So laughing a day, so twinkling a spring ;
When the nesting missel-thrushes cared not at all
To conceal, but trusted in the festival
As the end of fears that would once befall —
So whispering a wind, so wooing a Spring.

There was none that travelled up the down that day
But could know Time's wheel had gone the better way,
And the girl we saw across the hay

Was centre of all, was meaning and song ;
The elm and the ash and the primrose low,
The petalled cloud and the blue brook aflow,
The small brown bees and the larks talked so
That she loved them all as she dreamed along.

WINTER ENDING

OLD weeds upthrust in pasture wide half cheat
The eye to call them birds, with heads alert ;
But birds shake not as these pretenders do
In thin whirlpoolly wind, birds are at work,
Running in couples, thrush and blackbird ; crowds
Of starlings prodding through the chosen field ;
The daw or crow stands on the old ewe's back.
Much gray and pale among, one gem of noon,
One brilliant pool, that summer will not see,
Lies girdled with such greenness that a snake
Might borrow glistening wildfire for his coat.

Clean land-form, spires far seen, unhindered seen,
Slashed hedge and copse, where chips lie wholesome
white,

And through the ivy floor fresh primrose stars !
I can but guess what touch already untrances
The deep gray river, but I have my word
Not to be missing at the shallow soon
When the eels come up to win the purer wave.

PASTURE

SEAGULL, crow and wagtail
Post themselves as sentinels of thrift
Among the big-woolled sheep
Grazing so greedily this winter meadow :
That has no finery, golden or satin flowers,
To decorate the plain green work of eating.
There is no sunshine out to encourage pauses.
Lambs maybe play in April over the mounds
That border this sufficient but hard pasture,
To invite young strengths and follies. But we are
not lambs
And at the moment doubt if lambs exist.

IN BERKSHIRE

THE frosty sunny morning makes
Blue mountains of hills whose easy height
Betrays itself where a chimney smokes
And with a scarf of vapour white
Out-tops the dream of mass and might.

But still there is magic in it.
The farmhouse may be a fable, the hearth
That flies the filmy kite
May be fairy : barn and loft and garth
Perhaps if we went nearer
With a tune of wings would have taken flight.

VILLAGE SKETCH

HORSES, their heads together under a tree ;
Elm-trees and oaks, mantled in glistening green ;

Streams silver-brimmed, the stream-divided lea,
Wide-rising ground with barley thronged or bean :
A town-end of good houses, something grave,
Gray, square, and windowing far ; cypress and yew
Topping a long gray wall ; five poplars wave
Above the dark-plumed wall ; against high blue
Spear-flashing white the spire, and windcock new
Aloft the spire, proud plaything of these gales
Which bring more violet wreaths of cloud and swirl
Of whistling rain ; the storm's great ghost assails
The boys with bat and ball, the blue-capped girl
Who leans with her young love against the pales ;
While over the level the terrier speeds and springs,
Hoping to catch the swallows in their low swift rings.

MARKET TOWN

THIS drowsy day, were I only near,
I'd take my trot to a town I know,
A piece of stubborn antiquity,—
A place that at any time of the year
Has an air of philanthropy and good cheer
And when the tired old sun sinks low
Has a special lure for me.

I like the shops and the market stalls,
The wharf and the fort and the thick town walls,
The abbot's bridge, the abbey gate,
And I love the horsey little men
Who still find chances to handle a rein,
And the dames who gape where the huckster bawls
And the hens peering out of the crate.

The malthouse and the roller mill,
They catch my sauntering fancy still ;
 I'd go to the auction, pretend to save
By buying a clock with an Old Sol face.
Meanwhile I can only dream of the place,
 From Honey Hill to Angel Hill,
 The Vineyard, and Vulcan's Cave.

CRICKET, I CONFESS

' SIR, I cannot profess to understand
One thing in England ' — and Sakabé scanned
My face to be sure there was no offence astir, —
' It is Cricket, I confess. In the English character
That's the chief puzzle I have.' ' " My horn is dry,"
If you don't understand it, no more do I.'
Far out in the valley the sun was gilding green
Those meadows which in England most are seen,
Where churchyard, church, inn, forge and loft stand
 round
With cottages, and through the ages bound
The duckpond, and the stocks, and cricket-ground.
And I fell silent, while kind memories played
Bat and ball in the sunny past, not much dismayed
Why these things were, and why I liked them so.
O my Relf and Jessop and Hutchings long ago.

LONELY LOVE

I LOVE to see those loving and beloved
Whom Nature seems to have spited ; unattractive,
Unnoticeable people, whose dry track

No honey-drop of praise, or understanding,
Or bare acknowledgment that they existed,
Perhaps yet moistened. Still, they make their world.

She with her arm in his — O Fate, be kind,
Though late, be kind ; let her have never cause
To live outside her dream, nor unadore
This underling in body, mind and type,
Nor part from him what makes her dwarfish form
Take grace and fortune, envy's antitone.

I saw where through the plain a river and road
Ran quietly, and asked no more event
Than sun and rain and wind, and night and day,
Two walking — from what cruel show escaped ?
Deformity, defect of mind their portion.
But I forget the rest of that free day of mine,
And in what flowerful coils, what airy music
It led me there and on ; those two I see
Who, loving, walking slowly, saw not me,
But shared with me the strangest happiness.

LOOKING EASTWARD

DOWN our street when I was a boy I met with a friendly
man
Who took me to the stone-cross steps and said to me, See
Japan.

I stared at the East he pointed ; never have I seen a sky
so fine,
A shining height of clouds sun-bright, and loftier hyaline.

And, See the Mountain, said my friend, and I traced the
region cloud,
With intense wish to shape that peak, which made him
smile so proud.

I nearly saw, not that alone, but as it felt to me
Cities and domes and lakes and falls and even doorway and
tree.

But just the final face of the thing came not ; and I told
him so,
I only knew that the man was right and that I was stupid
and slow.

He smiled, and said I should find all out, and the words
he left me were these :
I come from my shop to see Japan, and the Mountain,
when I please.

SIXPENCE TO THE RIVER

SOME pause
To contemplate our Bridge because
Old *Camden* marked its stony strength
And marvellous length
When he declared BRITANNIA'S pride ;
Ben Jonson maybe at his side,
His pupil once but now his peer,
Admired the eloquent stream's career,
Promised a place to bridge and brook
In his forthcoming lyric book —
And maybe did not. I for one,

Though ready to break a lance for Ben,
Camden, Spenser and such sweet men,
Will stand to watch these ripples run
 And juggle the sun
On the stonework like a largess now
With quite unantiquarian brow,
With little of moralizing wish —
 Unless, that fish
Were better used by men ; and add
That by mysterious law each place
 Where Nature looks most gentle and glad
Attracts the rubbish-dumping race,
By whose refinement Nymph and Grace
 May walk in decent jam-jars clad.
But the gay water does its best,
Where vertebrae of traffic rest ;
The currents seize each twisty chance
And dace in dozens thrill to the dance.
To-day I surmise should be some great
Day in the annals of our small state, —
Folks assemble ; our splendid swans
Come bowing amid their myrmidons,
And where they ride the shining stream
A great perch glides with a champion's gleam ;
The butcher's ducks masque like immortals
Trooping at crystal cloud-capped portals,
Never drake such sheen displayed —
It must be something more than trade.
And wildly hoping him to outdo,
Through the master arch the kingfisher flew
 Ablaze in blue,
And back once more, a trifle vain

To be the escorting aeroplane ;
Then someone rarer far than that
In broad daylight, a church-tower bat —
Once supposed black, but this gold light
And his circuitous sidelong flight
Bloom him as purple as tropic flowers ;
There's a raree-show in this stream of ours,
And one old crow, town-crier elect,
From the elm recites what all expect.
So wait with me, on this warm wall,
For the climax of the festival,
First casting a silver sixpence in
To twinkle with ripple and feather and fin
And justify our presence here
Should the river god (and he must) appear.

DEPARTED

Or, 'tis more than Twenty Years Since

MOATED and granged, recall the Gentry who
Could as they would, but never wrongly, do ;
These at their wedding paid for anthem sung,
For voluntary played, and rice unflung.
Their funeral also had its golden tint,
Our choristers confused it with the Mint :
On the sad day, Regret would reign at three,
And later came Rejoicing with the fee.
To Gentry and no others was assigned
This special power : they in the evening dined.
Their cricket caps, of floral stripe and dye,
Proclaimed accomplishment, and did not lie.
For them a pitch smooth as their bowling-screen

Was guarded from the rougher, dustier green.
In church their knees impressed soft hassocks ; they
At mattins came, at vespers were away,
Except that spinster whose kind cherubs flew
About her while she moved from pew to pew
Lighting the candles. Parrots, mourn your friend ;
Canaries, let your trills to her ascend !

* * *

Who now succeed ? What demigods have we ?
Who scraped the gilding from the family tree ?
Ask of the roadhouse, try the bungalow.
Welcome, Squire Thenks-Chum and Lord Arfamo.

CHAFFINCH
On Suburban Growths

' GONE down, sir, and whatever bird you speak to
That really knows these parts will open his beak to
Support my view ; the place is *going down*.'
He paused, and frowned, if chaffinches may frown.
' This very street you're standing in confirms
The fact, that times get worse for birds and worms.
There was a day, before these fancy gents
Sent up at once their buildings and their rents
When Hadrian Avenue was Squandering Lane.
As things are now, a pretty shower of rain
Is wasted ; this high-polished surface throws
The water off so fast, one hardly knows
There's been a drop. Before these patent makes,
In the old track it used to lie like lakes,
And bathing birds, perhaps ten tens together,
Came down to dip and frill and fresh each feather.

Yes, in those days roadmakers could make roads,
 Ask, if you don't believe me, frogs and toads,
 Lizards and newts, — if they were here to-day,
 They'd pay no calls the other side o' the way.
 Myself, I never saw such lovely dust
 As we had here, before that Housing Trust —
 Blackbirds or graybirds, sparrows, jenny-wrens,
 Would come in quiet sun to chatter and cleanse ;
 And I could mention brambles, blackthorns, sedge,
 A crab-tree and two snub-oaks in the hedge, —
 Where, just where you are looking, at that date
 Two hedgehogs justified the married state.
 I did not mean, dear sir, to make you cry ;
 With all these people always passing by ;
 In fact, I had forgotten — I had best
 Be off, or be bumped off, like all the rest.'

ASK OLD JAPHET

' THAT's as that may be, that is ; what the Lord will, He
 bestoweth.
 Some hold one way, some another ; then again there's
 gospel truth,
 But that's a jewel nobody touched, not yet ;
 At least, nobody which I ever met.
 Folks in parliament, so the papers print,
 Volunteer for nothing ; that's a hint
 For you young college sparks ; ah, you may chuckle,
 But Greek nor Euclid aren't the only learning.
 You got to come to Japhet Honeysuckle
 To pack a bonfire that takes three days burning.
 Now any ass can read, that truth lives down

In the bottom of a well, among the frogs ;
Now, which well? Come, come answer, cap and
gown,
Or come with me and shear a flock of hogs.
Well then, as you just now, as I recall,
Put me the question, it ran, *Will it rain ?*
I don't expect you tapped the glass at all.
No more did I, nor greased the weather-vane.
I've not the time to put my considering cap on,
But someone up aloft has left the tap on.'

WAITING THE WORD

HALF lost between river and hill,
On a bye-stream parting grass and plough,
Is the small Chaucerian mill ;
Lonely then, and lonely now ;
Where moss and toadstool get long lives,
And undisturbed the brown vole dives,
Where the dogs chained close to their barrels regard
The rare-coming stranger in the yard
As excitement not to be missed,
And bark with merry and fierce ado.
The small boy emerges to share it too,
And points where the new eels twist
And the crayfish feed. The small boy's speech
Sounds Chaucer's England, broad and lusty.
The rough walls back to Chaucer reach,
Near windowless, mountain-roofed, wry-angled.
Within's the mill-gear, stopped and tangled ;
About, the hovels unthatched and musty.

'There's life in it.' Wake, O fruitful god,
So long the friend of sheaf and stack.

Towards this tenement nod.
Along this valley track
With whips new-plaited, mares new-shod,
Bring pride of golden waggons back.
Your waiting wheels and timbers and stones
Have not forgotten what well they did ;
The stream pours fast, — you need but bid,
And the work will be done as it was done once.

The miller will thrive
And whistle and wive,
And the boy whom you see is that miller I swear :
He is Chaucer's race,
He was born for the place
From the strength of his tread to the bronze of his hair.

STANZAS : MIDSUMMER, 1937

O ENGLAND ! lose not now, O never lose
The only glory that is worth endeavour ;
The times are doubtful, and the task to choose
Desperately hard : but they have seemed so ever.
Men before now, staring into their age,
Finding it baffling, have proved masterful.
Be of their line ; prepare for the turned page
Of outcome by the present scanned in full.

Reckon prosperity as a fleeting dance.
Grudge not adversity, for that unveils,
That counts the real wealth ; yet if it chance
That England long advance with swelling sails,

Then be not proud ; even Death, as English Donne
Interpreted long since, should not be proud ;
Be unbeguiled. Measure not by the ton
The wealth of nations. Mark each golden cloud.

How every country makes report of you,
My country ! with such attitude of praise
As Gibbon's Rome at high tide never knew.
Envy herself but offers you the bays.
Speak then with love and knighthood of each fact
Or project or desire of human good
In other nations ; nothing thence detract.
Be the true best by you best understood.

Too long, committed to such loyal course
As even successful mummary claims from you,
You follow forms which must beget remorse.
O England, cozened ? Let old zeal renew.
If indolence were named a hanging crime,
What thousands of us should be shortly sent
To execution ! Mercy gives us time,
And we may yet see what our cat-naps meant.

Arise then, and delight shall march with gain ;
Know what is honest, what is sly uncover.
Be what you have been ; *English* is no stain ;
England has many an unexpected lover.
The clearness of the windows of the soul
Men often sought and often found as yours.
Blue-eyed and lustrous, beautiful and whole,
Prove now your bright Shakespearean sense endures !

LATER POEMS

IN WEST FLANDERS

Is it the light that makes the silence
Of this long lake, for silence rules —
Though many row, or walk the terrace —
The curving shores, the china pools ?
Or perhaps that hill of many memories
That citadels it high beyond
The farthest osiers, casts a spell
On this not quite coeval pond ?

The air is populous with voices,
And yet the moment that we strayed
From the highroad, tempted by the cloister
Of elms towards the watery glade,
We were not conscious of these voices
But of a calm, a lull, a still
Invulnerable world of silence —
O quiet sky and lake and hill !

This sluice allows a bubbling current
To slide beneath the sluiceman's loft,
But that faint rumour lasts a moment
And unimaginably soft
Dies ; and the gay and sly exchanges
Of parties in the boats aswim,
Out there among the lingering lilies,
Leave silence like an angel hymn.

What read you there, at your small table,
Young beauty with the varnished nails ?
I read a — well — Victorian novel,

I seldom read such solemn tales,
But, finding it while I was waiting
For Albert (fishing over there),
I found I couldn't leave off reading —
I think it's something in the air.

And you, friend landlord, and chance comer,
Buying a view-card and a bock,
What are you worrying out together?
Nothing, we hope, that you will mock.
The fact is, he and I were talking
Of carp and how they seem to know
A friend who gives them bread or cherries —
They live a hundred years or so.

But quietly here, among these willows,
This boy has made himself a lair,
And we will question him in whispers :
He shines and warns us, ' Please take care !
My friends the wood-mice might suspect us,
I'm from the town — but here she comes,
The wisest and I think the mother,
To carry off these dangerous crumbs.'

Such notes upon the verge of silence
Imperil that deep flood no more
Than does the polished lessening ripple
Shaped by the angler's gentle oar ;
The autumn evening now impending
Changes the painted lake we found,
But our enchantment travels on,
A silver silence of sweet sound.

WESERLAND, 1939

HERE above the water-meads
The stately heron wings,
And lighting in the breezy reeds
Attends to serious things ;
A thousand speckled butterflies
Gleam round the purple flowers,
And in the sun the dragnet dries,
And from the village towers
Deliberately old time
Dispenses his good hours.

These good hours, all wise men know,
May just suffice if husbanded ;
The husbandman has many a row
Of rye and wheat for barn and shed,
If only moments can be kept
From dodging past ; and still some grain
Lies flatted by the battering rain
Which last night never slept.
So, some to scythe and some to bind,
While the tawny sun looks kind
And harvest-like ; while every soul
Agrees and sees the matter whole,
And shrewd old time
Allows them his plain dole.

THE DREAMER

WHEN most were flocking into town
To the bannered, tented square,

And while carillon tunes sang down
To the clubs and reunions there,

It seems (and he who told me knew
My cousin from a child)
That Stephanette passed old Dellieu,
Said nothing, faintly smiled,

And she was on the causeway going
Mightily to the west ;
He watched her, and resumed his hoeing,
And never a moment guessed

That ten years after he should be
The last of us round here
To have seen her. ' I'd no thought,' said he,
' Except it was something queer

' On such a day to see her there
And missing all the fun.
She carried no burden, that I swear,
Unless her purse was one.'

But remembering her, and how I felt
When she had time for me,
I deeply know that all signs spelt
That secret destiny.

I cannot wonder, nor even grieve
That she who made life seem
The landscape of a dream should leave
No clue to her own dream.

CHANCE PLEASURES

SMILES from strangers met but once,
On simplest affairs,
When nature welcomed circumstance,
May last us years.
And sunbursts over nameless plains,
Not homes to us, shall gild
Further adventures with the lens
Of life in our home field.

One cannot count nor reckon thus,
Nor tell at the time ;
No use to note it down, no use,
When such spells gleam, —
When such winds stir such linden leaves,
Such lamps shine late and pale
Over empty quays, unmeaning waves —
But wait ; at length, the spell !

BEAUTY IN THE MOUNTAIN

LOVELY, lovely, lovely child,
Passing on this hill,
Where rock and rill
Assert the wild,
You walk with perfect ease and gentleness,
You sweet civility ; we but glance, and bless !

Fairy, fairy, fairy dell,
Beneath fierce jaws
Of stone and claws
And snares of hell,

How cool your music, unafraid your hours —
Of woodmen, lovers, butterflies and flowers.

THE KIND STAR

YOU must be as others are ;
Puzzled, clouded, even afraid.
Still, you seem to have a star
Lighting you with certainty,
Companying you constantly,
Deathless in conservancy
While others run dismayed.

So to me, sweet you, you are
Heavenly message, moving here ;
You become my gentle star.
Look, and all my prowlings clear ;
Speak, and desperation dies ;
Come my way, and fury flies ;
Joy, and man's huge chaos lies
Calm in calm atmosphere.

TO J. A.

SUPPOSE the heavens still dominate our day,
And every second of our mortal way
Thereto must answer, yet I know no light
In the proud concourse of the cloudless night
Which signifies a nature tuned to yours.
I see no quality in those emperors
To claim you for their subject ; though their gleam
Be various as their number, you still seem
Illumined by some undiscovered fount

Of beauty and honour, some orb paramount
And scarcely to be tracked, so shy-serene
And so unglaring in its gaze ; cool green
Like some new forest lily, I should guess
That heavenly presence dreams in quietness.
But being no great astrologer I leave
That starcraft for some other to achieve,
And only, passing, bless your strange sweet sign,
And much rejoice that you in daylight shine.

AFTER A MASQUE
Chronos to Diana

COMING to converse with gentle Diana
In fancy here,
I saw a fawn springing, fleeting through the meadows
As though the year
Were anything else but darkening December ;
The lovely deer
Went moonwhite, lithe and easy through the meadows,
Pleasing me well,
Being the bright hint of that gracious lady
Beneath whose spell,
Wherever she walks and whenever she dances
I gladly dwell.
Then will I sing the fawn that might have been this
Goddess's own,
And the still gray hour wherein imaged through the big
trees
Diana shone,
And all the beauty, whereof she leads the revels,
That I have known.

GODSTOW

SPARKLING with west winds dancing along the tansies,
A hundred summers, happy summers, fly ;
The village is as full of loves as the meadows
Are rich in zephyrs, petals ; lovers die.

But hark, the cuckoo, he with confident anthem
Is there again, and the snipe with queer tune soars
Out of the plash where the myosote is coming,
And the river of life once again through the sluices pours
Clear, musical, blue ; and the chub and perch get brilliant ;
And you should have walked with me through the leas
to-night,
But seeing that centuries fly so over the meadows,
And where one flower springs wrong, ten thousand are
right,

I'll say not a word more about it ; for I can hear now
The voice of nature above my trivial claim,
And if only you might outdance a hundred summers,
I would think after all there was something in the game.

COUNTRY CHARACTERS

THEN wallflowers, under lower windows, yield
Delightful chance encounters ; then we love
The pink, the gilliflower ;
the lime-tree bower
Or far-roofed avenue ; and out afield
The honeysuckle ; then the zephyrs rove
With charms for days from silk bean-blossoms borne, —
And if they tire, how comes the rainbow-happy shower !

Such summer miracles, such truths, such times,
The wise Lord Bacon bade us feel long since, —
 No wiser he, all told,
 than young and old
Who give small thought to his prose or my rhymes,
But whose deep aptitude for one 'great Prince
That else in prison lies,' our own god Pan,
Creates them pleasancess outmarvelling Kubla Khan.

What songs the tiniest hillside springwell sings
Before its lymph glides to the farm's old sluice,
 Some listeners know ; O hear ;
 this music clear
Can summon a pure silence ; end bad things ;
Its quickness glad, its willingness have use,
And once regarded, bright in a breathing morn,
Will find a way for joy, with flower-spirits dear.

By flower and leaf, by rill and pasture blest,
By seasons and perennial magic white,
 Many are masterly ;
 are truly free.
They with sweet presence fill the troubled breast
As flower-scent does and more ; their lives delight
The sojourner, and from their company flows
The brook's eternal youth, and more than the brook knows.

A WINDOW IN GERMANY

August 1939

STILL the mild shower grows on ; amid the drops
The gray gnats loiter or frisk ; but we within

Like their sport less. So from my window here,
This ample casement built in the huge old wall
Which even a nunnery might find thick enough,
Barred with old iron branchwork monster-thorned,
I glance into the idle croft below.
I could not find a more familiar scene,
Known from my childhood, known to all my race —
The flagged path from the kitchen of the farm
Into the tousled orchard, plum and pear ;
And under boughs of elder the stone sty ;
The dog's dish which to-day he half forgets ;
The nettles cluttering up the heaps of logs,
The raspberry-canes scrambling on leaning pales :
An English casual scene, which tells at once
Of rural mastery, and of rural ease.
Thus from my window here in Germany
The pleasant yard-scape shows. The world beyond
Is Sunday evening, and deserves its peace,
After the dogged action of the week,
The harvest battle fought into the night
With lanterns steady or marching ; on whose heel
Tremendous thunder flamed and gunned for hours,
Bursting from Weser's vast black-wooded hills.
Such hills, such forests, even such confluent storm
Were not in my old haunt ; but it is much
To find the kinship of this quiet house,
Where gentlest goodness lives and constant care,
And where, from many a nook, far-sundered ghosts,
To whom my ways mean something, gaze on me.

YOU NEVER STAY

STAY, kingfisher, so fleet along
This wind-blown water ; stay by me,
Choose this soft-tinted willow tree,
And think no wrong
Where no wrong is ; but I confess
My shape and presence must distress
A spirit of the wilderness.
I vainly long
To show you that this giant race
Has not abandoned every grace,
But shares your world ; and calls it yours.
Come, praise with me this startling sun,
This primrose paradise begun
When winter still should stalk the moors.
The gold-chained bee, more kind than you,
Just now about and about me flew,
And seemed inclined, though grumblesome,
To pass the time of day :
But you, however oft I come,
You never stay.

TO SYLVA ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE

HOT pursuit has done its worst, and here stand we,
Far beyond the telephone,
The Sunday crime-sheet, —
You may say, if words are wanted, We are free.
What seems odd is not that freedom, but that we,
We, and millions (tangled still
In whirlpool strugglings)
Shared it not. Here's such abundance. Track, stream, tree

Multitudinously yield it ; these huge hills,
Valleys green from farm to lake
And château wood-rides,
Never heard of our hoarse streets, our mines, our mills.

Up among these rocky dells, like eft or bee
All that baffled host might come
And be enfranchised,
Given a season of this deeper liberty.

LONDON : A DECEMBER MEMORY
WITH magic haste our spirits range
From dark worlds to serene ;
And magic haste brings such a change
To London-on-the-Green.

December's wilderness of snow,
Dead-weight of sky, fanged gale,
On a sudden into springtime flow ;
Angels for once prevail.

Allured to walk in this new dream
Beneath this rose-leaf sky
I take my time ; the sweet extreme
Will surely justify

A sauntering hour, — besides, the streets
Have Sunday's blessing too.
In Aldersgate just now one meets
A car, or maybe two.

The sun, the peace, the solitude
 Befriend the ugliest mass
Of buildings, rarefy the crude
 Muddles of brick and glass.

Their puny ornaments assume
 Something of nobler phrase ;
Dry weeds of sculpture try to bloom,
 Form's promise wins the gaze.

But — chiefest charming, best reborn —
 The west wind's stratagems
Have quite beguiled ' this pious morn '
 The pleasant ancient Thames.

Idly he meditates his course
 With silvering ripples graced,
Remembering his far country source,
 Questioning his recent haste ;

Or liking, if we may so dare
 To read a river's mind,
These masonries, aloft in air
 With which his shores are lined ;

These cumbrous castles of affairs,
 Floating like dove-silk veils,
Like buds the woodside palm now wears,
 Like fairy cliffs and sails.

I, playing so with what I see
 In this enchanted place,

Would none the less for that agree
Were you to state a case

For seeing plain great Paul's brave dome
And constant golden sign,
Or naming as the names might come
The ghosts of London's line.

Here Pope has smiled when Fleet-brook crept
Into the mightier urn,
And here Keats crossed, the young adept
Of glory at every turn.

You speak of Pepys, you doff your hat
To Shakespeare and rare Ben ;
This day let leisure contemplate
London and London's men.

To them indeed belongs this hour
Of winter charmed to spring ;
Like theirs its pure new startling flower,
Its heaven-fresh zephyr wing.

AT WARNHAM

' I WAS a boy here. Every fence and brake
I knew as well as morning prayers ; I knew
Every brown pebble in this brook ; I drew
A hundred sketches of this aldery lake,
The wasp-nest in the bank, the swimming snake.
And often, while I scurried to the mill
To watch the torrent spouting, I stood still

Entranced by the far wall of downlands blue,
Eternal majesty.' Then who are you ?
' Shelley my name. Look there, my father's Place,
The Inn too where I first attempted ale.'
But say, these country scenes which you retrace
And have by heart, how chanced these scenes to fail
Of any portion in your heaven-sent rhyme ?
' Believe me, but for these it had not been sent.
Thereunder moved they ; and had fate given time,
They should have been my chief sweet argument.'

ECHOES FROM THE GREAT WAR

IN MAY 1916 : NEAR RICHEBOURG ST. VAAST

THE green brook played, talked unafraid
As though like me it gladly quitted
The shabby, shattered zones of fire
With barbed wire webbed, with burnt scars pitted.

It was my hour, and sunset's flower ;
Now I could breathe and shed my trouble ;
The track even here had danger in it,
And the next farm lay a heap of rubble.

So being alone, my last job done,
I followed the course of that lithe water
Westward in blossoming waywardness,
Such beauty neighbouring so much slaughter,

With ray and song beguiled along ;
It seemed the war, for all its cunning,
Had missed this orchard brook, or some
Especial fortune kept it running ;

Half scared at this, something amiss,
I doubted whether curst illusion
Had seized my brain and lured me on
To some intolerable conclusion ;

So paused, went back to the general track,
The safer way for soldiers' walking :

And as the stream's last murmur stilled,
Our sixty-pounders started talking.

RHYMES ON BETHUNE, 1916

OLD town of France, the wish to walk
Your friendly streets had been our talk
In roofless barns, in rat-run saps,
Among war's most heart-piercing shapes ;
Our dead companions, they would speak
Of you, and smile, ' Perhaps next week —
Perhaps next week I'll go on leave.'
Faint visions, that did not deceive.
We, not struck down, dared not much think
Why all of us stood on the brink,
That should have been the safe highway
Towards Life's gardens sweet with May :
And not a man declined, Bethune,
Your most politely offered boon :
An art of life precise and keen,
Flowers on the table, *bonne cuisine*,
And, after nights in trench and keep
Sleepless, serene sweet-valanced sleep.
O that was blessing, that was luck,
Four miles from fire-steps, mines and muck,
To see a church not yet a wreck,
To enter the bank and cash a cheque ;
And as my memory tells the tale,
No distance from the green canal,
From the inn window, still I see
My old platoon acclaiming me,
The old platoon, or some of them,

Enjoying life, which dolts condemn,
At the corner of a Rue whose name
They can't quite get, but like *quand même* ;
They woo me to their kind retreat,
With song and joke and cognac neat.

Leaving these boys I find my way
Where light winds in young lime-trees play
Along a pink but modest street,
While evening light falls sad and sweet.
Here I shall lodge, and here I find,
However critically inclined,
Two sisters, teachers, will not rest
Till they have lodged me 'attë best,' —
As shy and gentle as wood doves these
Reveal their wish to set at ease
A scapegrace boy whose scanty French
Is all he brings from Auchy Trench.

Why should I now so yearn to know
Just what they said, so long ago ?
To put on canvas, pale and bright,
The countenances that smiled that night ?
If only I could cause to flower
Afresh that happy vanished hour
When, hardly mentioning the great war
That ravined just beyond their door,
These ladies stayed shamelessly late
In consultation and debate
With one outlandish, whom as guest
They welcomed to their timid nest !
I cannot *see* them now, I grieve

To fail in this. Let Time upheave
His oldest citadels : he can.
He hunts me out of all my plan.
But spite of him, if I may speak
As a not wholly cracked antique
In Paradise, I'll claim for these
Two ladies Learning's best Degrees,
And should exult did they in turn
Desire to see my cobwebbed urn.

NEAR ALBERT-SUR-ANCRES, 1916

AT the foot of the church-tower I noticed some weeds,
Dock, henbane and nettle, a dusty crew,
And still the dust flew
From the lorry-wheels passing : I noticed some weeds
In the angle between
The tower and the nave, where weeds always had been.

The church was a skeleton, but just at that date
There was nothing going over. The Line had moved on.
A vast autumn day in immensity shone ;
My errand was easy, my business could wait.
While I leisured it so, from the verge of the street
Those scruffy old weeds in a flash had me beat.

It was one of those corners behind a great war
Where nature had skulked like a spider or mouse,
Appalled but persisting ; just room and no more ;
Overlooked when the huge broom was sweeping the house ;
Now shine, my dead garland, and while the fates trample
The best we had blossoming, be you my example.

THE CAMP IN THE WOOD

Somme Battle, 1916

DESPERATE wood, your skinny trees
And unmossed clay
Have found green grace again to please
To-day
Any who may be going your way.

Little did you once please me ;
I saw you undersized and gray,
And a beanstick's not my favourite tree ;
Our menaced stay
Within your bounds was misery.

The skies were sullen, our past
And future looked like these.
The skies were louring and cast
Steel rains sharp and fast
On tents and tracks and trees.

Then those stupid guns,
Enormous, in the sandpit denned :
Still their savage good-evening runs
In memory, still their big mouths send
Horrible hate to Huns :

Which name recoiled to me
And with deep trouble thronged my soul,
And marshalled ultimately
The way it would not : such control
But fathered liberty !

Thus to me in the vale of years
 Holy almost and serene
Martinsart Wood appears.
 May you be fresh and green,
Dear coppice, when Doomsday nears !

TO A NATURE-LOVER

YOUR cry is ' Back to Nature ' ; we
 Whole-heartedly agree.

In nineteen-sixteen we emerged
From front-lines high-explosive-scourged,
Knowing we had some days ahead
 Of life in quiet country.
High summer's vivid dome for days
Roofed our whistling singing ways,
And south we marched without affrays
 And camped with hardly a sentry.

It might be some old water-wheel,
Some rivulet twining like an eel,
Some lonely elm — the old appeal
 Struck home among us slogging.
Great national forests seemed our lovers,
Gladly would we have tried those covers,
In every heath we wished manœuvres,
 But orders allowed no lagging.

What longing filled us while we trod
With footsore rhythm each tumbril-road,

And passed the quarryman's tramline load
And saw the harvest thronging !
Each cockerel flamed with our own fire,
Each thatched roof housed our kind desire,
We stared from furrow to barn and spire
With a most natural longing !

RUINS

BE swift, the day will soon be here,
And I don't quite see why scramble out
Of safe or fairly safe C.T.'s
To smell out useless heaps like these ;
Be quick then, for the daylight's near,
And God knows what this game's about.

We sprawled up out of Something Road,
And trenches for a moment seemed
A dream's false-fluttering episode ;
Beneath our feet a true road gleamed.
Beside us railings, gardens, gates
Shattered but recognized appeared,
Givenchy's prim snug villadom,
Which Worley half admired, half feared.

The least destroyed might still preserve
Lines of a windowed wall, red roof.
The battlefield's appalling curve
Coiled round, with flaming bursts for proof,
Doom's maw ! but sense of love and kind
Still rose to us as we prowled that street,

And we were mutely glad to find
Such answer to our indiscreet
Adventure.

Grayness rushed to light,
And animal-like we hustled down
To sandbagged workings, and that night
With countless others was all gone.
But still it beats the shocks and shellings
That we responded, had a mind
To walk among those gun-flogged dwellings
And keep in touch with something kind.

FARM BEHIND BATTLE ZONE

GENTLE, dark day, and country tracks,
Houses as yet unhurt,
I saw you and I feared the axe
Invisible and curt
Which from that heaven of hellish chance
Would lay you in the dirt.

But chicken pecked about, and sows
Grunted across the yard,
And willows with pin-cushion boughs
Stood on their usual guard ;
Madame was making lace, Louise
Writing a picture-card.

I cannot count the hours, that passed
With that farm menaced so,
Of which I saw some few ; the blast
Of war at length laid low

Each tile and lath, each pane and latch
Of the quietest farm I know.

COMPANY COMMANDER, 1917

'How lovely are the messengers that preach us the gospel
of peace.'

So sang my friend, the company commander, in the
trough of war,

Amid interminable shocks and snags, expecting no release.

It was not irony that prompted his song ; though the
daily score

Of casualties was even at the moment employing his pen,
And though his ridiculous shelter could stop no missile
more

Than an empty bully-tin, being the target of daily torrents
Of hissing shattering shells ; yet no shell tore

Through VID.'s own armament ; signing returns and
warrants

He recalled old music, commanded, guarded, jollied his
men.

'O for the peace that floweth like a river.'

That too he sang, and damned, at each pause, red-tabbed
Brigade,

Whose orders for grimness more than the frost-spell made
us shiver ;

Through VID.'s mild music loomed some bomb-and-
bayonet raid.

Dead lies my friend, the fighter, from whom I have rarely
heard

Against a human enemy one unhumorous word.

WAR CEMETERY¹

WHY are they dead? Is Adam's seed so strong
That these bold lives cut down mean nothing lost?
Indeed, they would have died; ourselves ere long
Will take our turn. That cheque is signed and crossed.
But, though this dying business still concerns
The lot of us, there seems something amiss
When twenty million sudden funeral urns
Are called for. Have you no hypothesis?
Was heaven prepared for this abrupt incursion,
Was the word out to modernize the choir?
Or had the other congress (no aspersion)
A labour problem and a dwindling fire?
In any case they're dead, and by their dates
Nine-tenths should now be laughing with their mates.

No one can say they are not buried well,
At least as much of them as could be found;
Here grow abundant herbs of sweetest smell
And the rose here beats all; the easy sound
Of shears or scythe comes from the grassy border,
The blackbird runs across the shaven green.
Dressed by the right, fallen in with perfect order,
The dead contingents in gray stone are seen.
Some races cling to something more than stone;
'See, this was Georges, in his new uniform,
Bright cheeks, straight eyes — you really should have
known
Our Georges.' The photograph through sun and storm

¹ No particular cemetery is alluded to. These stanzas were originally included in the volume by several authors entitled *Challenge to Death*, published by Messrs. Constable.

Lives its short life, says something that Georges said,
But one still wonders why he should be dead.

Man, like some friends of his, is a grand fellow
For generous leaps into appalling holes ;
Among his fears, the fear of seeming yellow
Urges him far, displaces, uncontrols.

Then he is prone to vanity, will dance
On steeple-points so he may end notorious,
And from his flowerful work will follow chance
Into the cannon's mouth to be called glorious.
But Georges arriving at the barracks felt
Fame rationed thin among so many clients —
Not many ways of wearing badge and belt,
Not many giants in a world of giants.

I fear that Georges made some slight contribution
To his untimely, unfair dissolution.

Blame him not much ! O wish him what has brightened
Per saecula saeculorum Adam's race :

Life new-attained, limbs lissomed, conscience heightened,
The same old Georges with godhead in his face.

This for the present must be left mere wish,
And would have been the same if he had stayed
Along the streets of Calais hawking fish

Or where he was before the trumpets brayed.
There are whom I could blame with keener zest
Although his grave is such a garden now —
Vicarious heroes from whose mighty breast
Fumed the hot air that made those trumpets blow,
Fishers of men with nets of strange device,
Established in gold letters — at this price.

Ideals, after all, in noble states
Are necessary as the petrol pump ;
While the great public slaves to pay its rates,
Someone must elevate the frowsy lump,
And from the rut of commonplace prosperity
Cry up adventurous passion, since elsewhere
Masked in most loathed fair-seeming of sincerity
Satanic synods, hand to hilt, prepare.
How sweet is power, one mind's command how sweet !
The patriot with his pencilled slips may feel
His headlines booming down the distant street
And shedding influence on each cottage meal.
That Georges was gullible his chums admit,
Or would, but have forgotten him and it.

Tyrtaeus led the way ; the bards since him
Have done their best with martial strains to sunder
Georges, Hans, Bill, Carlos. Couched where goldfish swim,
They sing for glory : ' There's a sound of thunder
Afar,' to meet which tempest they approve
That every citizen should grasp a rifle,
In the direction of the thunder move,
Rush on the foe, transfix him. Death ? a trifle.
Thus lyric genius ever stooped to cheer
The march that ends in billets under clay,
Melodious metres helped the lance and spear,
And should have stopped what came the other way.
Love thou the poets. Georges even when he fell
Had word from them : ' See, what a lovely shell.'

Is War so subtle, that of his machine
So meagre and absurd a wrack survives ?

Or is Peace wise to clothe with such gay green
That spasmodic visnomy whose menace thrives
The more, the less regarded or reported ?
Assume which way you please, one thing is sure :
The face of Peace was hardly more distorted
By War's acids and axes than is War
Veiled from the sense by Peace. His metals die
Faster than skulls of those they struck to pieces ;
A decade after, you may peer and pry
For strands of wire, for mortars whose caprices
 Made your days years, for shaft and iron emplacement.
 Vain search — to find inscrutable Effacement.

Perhaps the acres that have staged event
Will yield some whisper of it, might we hear.
Immense endeavour, tragic tournament,
History's smithying should not disappear
Without reverberation. Battle flames
With other ardours than of bursting shells,
And many a gray surviving soldier claims
That strange excitement surges nowhere else.
Walking past Mont Saint Jean I caught a drift
Of Waterloo's red crisis, and have known
Suspense and worse and felt the barrage lift
In even vaster battles of our own ;
 Yet I have wandered stranger worlds than those,
 Planes which whoever dreams intensely knows.

Verbrandenmolen's windmill likes the breeze
That flies across this farmland ; the bright toil
Is as it should be. Why alone are these
Condemned ? But not these only, save we foil

The sails and cogs of other, uglier mills
Whose masters even keener wait each gust,
And beckon to false shapes of golden hills
Where Adam's seed may be ground down to dust.
Arise, young spirits, and march in pride, but not
Against your kind ; attack at dawn, and capture
Line after line — but fire no single shot
Except of progress, and run through with rapture
These old, gross demons : Rumour, Ignorance,
Advantage, Spite, Conceit and False Romance.

That victory will be won, if I may trust
A thought that steals about this place, so mute
Upon what lately raged here. This poor dust
Ranked soldierly, these veterans salute
The promise ; the old guard presenting arms
Trusts to the new, and gives it all it can.
Pointing at twinkling spires and big-barned farms
They smile a little. ' As the thing began
It ended ; only, as you see, we boys
Have copped unlucky, and the C.O. too,
But he'd just had *his* leave ; well, all that noise,
And all us millions as they say *napu*.'

Thus a dim music every step I tread
Connotes the living purpose of these dead.

IN THE MARGIN

WHILE few men praise and hardly more defend
That armed power which from here, and as things are,
Appears the whole Japan ; while this forced war
Inhuman drags to some inglorious end,

And kills, and fires, and fouls, I too must feel
Horror and wonder at the deeds thus done,
And fear each day's exploit of crashing steel
Has merely lost what old Japan had won.

But through the smoke and dust I still can see,
And may I not forget, much that belongs
To that great name ' Japan ' as well as those.
Faultless devotions raise clear eyes to me ;
Through crowded streets gray-headed virtue goes,
And from poor farms I hear old peaceful songs.

TO W. O. AND HIS KIND

If even you, so able and so keen,
And master of the business you reported
Seem now almost as though you had never been,
And in your simple purpose nearly thwarted,
What hope is there ? What harvest from those hours
Deliberately, and in the name of truth,
Endured by you ? Your witness moves no Powers,
And younger youth resents your sentient youth.

You would have stayed me with some parable,
The grain of mustard seed, the boy that thrust
His arm into the leaking dike to quell
The North Sea's onrush. Would you were not dust.
With you I might invent, and make men try,
Some genuine shelter from this frantic sky.

EXORCIZED

Written in October 1938

TWENTY years had nearly passed since the War called
Great had roared its last,
And some were talking, men who fought the Somme
before their twentieth year :
They talked of echoes, shadows, hauntings not so easily
exorcized,
They granted Time had healed grim wounds, and yet
these watchers recognized
One stubborn and total fear.

‘ My dreams,’ said one, and spoke for all, ‘ less frequently
these nights recall
The clear-cut circumstance, the countless bitter facts
familiar then
In gunpit, shell-hole, raid, patrol ; the mud that swallowed
gun, mule, man
Is seldom in my dreaming track, nor aid-post blood that
piteous ran,
Nor the dead in smashed-down den ;

‘ But this it is which shatters sleep, and makes one’s
weary body leap :
Out of the gray uncertain dream this sentence speaks
from shore to shore.
“ The Armistice has all gone wrong. While we were
out of the abyss,
It seemed heaven’s mercy, faked you see merely to add
new death to this :
The War is on once more.” ’

Twenty years had nearly passed, and while these watched,
they saw aghast
That giant enemy of sleep, that ghost which summed the
worst they knew
Come creeping into waking thought, creeping and gather-
ing like a storm
About the summer's loveliness, a vaster, more inhuman
form.

The dream was coming true.

Back to your madhouse, child of hell : too many of us
know you well ;
Infest our sleep, if thence we keep some record of your
eyeless eyes.
But trespass not in the face of day. You find you cannot
prowl this way ;
Your very foulness forearmed those who now have
checked your matinee,
The generous, selfless, wise.

How things most complex, coiled and twined, simplicity
may best unbind
Is no new secret ; but till now it never showed so fountain-
clear.
The meeting of four men as friends unhorses all the
ancient fiends ;
Believing still the best will ever yield the best, as now it
ends
One swollen and final fear.

TO THE SOUTHDOWNS
At the yearly Reunion, 1939

TRUE, wars have not yet died out of the earth.
Some go day-dreaming still that bomb and shell,
Engines and legions topped and tipped with steel,
Will bring some glorious consequence to birth.
But you long since discovered, war is hell ;
The men you fought against are of your mind ;
Wise victory is yours and theirs to-day.
Through recent hours of crisis I could feel
This power of veterans quietly combined
To baffle danger, take the better way.

You, my old comrades, see the modern trend
Of men and manners hurrying from the past ;
In new commotion it may often seem
That your far battles were a weary dream,
And your experience, once so fierce and vast,
Grown useless now. Be sure, that journey's end
Was not when you returned from fires of war ;
You've that truth in you, learned in suffering then,
Which marches on, and secretly rules men,
And every year grows mightier than before.

Those whom we left in Flanders and beyond
Yet speak, and share the cause, and stand for peace ;
New generations unawares respond
To their deep meaning ; their effects increase.
We reassemble, and we have them here,
True-hearted, eager, just the men we knew ;
And he who writes these words comes year by year
To show how much he owed to them and you.

WAR TALK : WINTER 1938

THEY'RE talking of another war,
They say some things I've heard before,
They seem to me a shade too sure
That they're the first, on this queer pitch.

I hardly know what words to use
To disenchant them of their views,
They've read their press, and they accuse . . .
And want to show they'll take the ditch.

This makes me call my old friends back,
To help me haunt my new friends' track.
I wish I had the artist's knack
To win life-likeness from the past.

I'd have dear Daniells here just now,
And Wally Ashford here — 'and how !' —
And kindest Naylor : some pow-wow
Would happen with so brisk a cast.

But they're all dead, and lots besides.
Where's Northcote ? from our gaze he hides,
And French, the merry boy, abides
With nothing, in some nameless grave ;

Tice, son of duty, waits for us
In his neat-built sarcophagus ;
Collyer is just anonymous,
Our jester once, who lacked a shave.

If memory would not dodge me so,
There must be hundreds whom I know

Whose laugh would pace these boys, and slow
Their haste to reach a wasteful end.

Unkind to us, ghosts mainly ! worse
Unkind to their own cause and course,
For partial honour all perverse ;
But youth will always find a friend.

THE SAME ENGLISHMAN

AMONG these boys (and they were sound
And generous all as may be found
In any of this world's societies)
One especially caught my mind,
Who frequently had striven to find
The else forgotten harsh anxieties
Undergone by the boys I saw
Much like these same round the evening lamp,
Involved in huge distorted war
And dying in a tremendous camp.
With equal mind, with special sight,
With his interpretation right,
This youth long afterwards had made
(As later speech would state) the grade,
And by his spirit newly empowered
In scenes where I myself had cowered
From flying and upheaving hell,
I knew the dead and missing fell
Not unrewarded ; where he goes,
I see a tough platoon of those.

BY THE BELGIAN FRONTIER

‘ WHERE youth in fires
Fiend-blown, fiend-sudden, strove and fell,
The lilac sunlight plays like sweet desires,
The new leaves melodize, and the winds tune well,
The far tower’s bell answers the browsing-bell.

‘ The twentieth year
Is now fulfilled, the lands of nourished strength
Warm-bodied give us welcome with their yield
Of flax blue-flowered and white. The placid length
Of the crystal lake lies like a war-god’s shield,
Fallen for boys to find while flying kites afield.’

So even this spring
I wrote, I stared with never a wild surmise
Near that old frontier. Now the hideous thing
Is loose again, the ready death-forms rise.

VARIA

THESE PROBLEMS

STRENUOUS to live the life for which he came,
Man notes his facts, and charts his brilliant course,
Man takes his own few facts and then perforce
Discovers error in the next man's aim.
Warm with his precious night-light, he will blame
His total similar, shout himself hoarse
To prove the elixir his, the one pure source
Of general good, the quintessential flame
For life's uncertain hearth to glitter with.
Some men more subtly urge their single creeds,
But not less sternly, forming rede and myth
Whence it may be the future blooms, or bleeds :
An admirable passion in mankind,
Were it not still the blind leading the blind.

ABOUT THESE GERMANS

HE who now speaks some verse to friendly minds
Once ventured words in praise of charming France ;
Could venture further. Through this world he finds
A wealth of life to laud, to love. By chance

In Heidelberg a master of our tongue,
An equal friend of France and Britain, read
Those grateful rhymings, held them not ill sung,
And welcoming the rhymer, commented :

' I have some hope, you one day will compose
Lines of the same regard, the same approach
Towards Germany.' Remembering that disclose,
The rhymer sets his Moselwein abroad.

Let there be gathered in one social scene
Of Englishmen and Germans any score,
And spite of language, habit, will between,
Those men will part good friends. — We stand at war.

We — who ? If war were fought by those who frame
The hideous goblins due to be destroyed,
The comic spirit might enjoy the game,
And it might gratify our unemployed.

But let digression hide her face. The match
In progress now has little use for her.
The bonfire, though its flame seem loth to catch,
Is nicely laid for millioned massacre.

Not the time now for cordial verse or wine
To flow between these lines of kindred folk.
Blot out those dreams of *morgensonnenschein*.
What is a bayonet for ? The other bloke.

Still, he who now and ever prefers the speech
Of Shakespeare, Milton, Coleridge, Hardy, calls
On long remembrance ; hears the flaming screech
Of war he knew between these nationals.

He sees their rival courages ; admires.
Such men would fight a race of nightmares down.
Alike they stand beneath the dawn's drum-fires
Unshatterable of soul ; alike are blown

To mist or muck ; he sees, and sees much else.
O that our general sight would soon disband

The artifice which leads men to such hells.
There's no sworn enemy in that kind land

With all its clever cities and calm plains,
Markets and farms, forests and factories,
Big busy streams, broad highroads, lazy lanes,
Modern and mediaeval unities —

No final foe, graybeard or young blue eye,
Nor daily drive that tends except to good.
There's still the concept : Rather we would die
Than be perpetually misunderstood.

A RECOLLECTION IN A FAR YEAR

SOME say that in the streets of Korymbë
That day,
And those of many another Threnian town,
Out in drenched fields, along lank forest rides,
On beacons high, and by gray ocean cliffs,
Strangers were met on a sudden ; their dark gaze
Charming beyond all rare comparisons,
Their presence wakening a mysterious joy.
These vanished without utterance. For my part,
I saw no such bright shadows ; but I felt
The heavenly exaltation of that day
As vitally as any here, or any
In Altamont, with whom we waged stern war,
And through whose lands the same hour vanquished
all.

It is so long ago now, much is lost.
I almost need a lawyer to attest

That I lived then ; but some things sparkle forth
From general indistinction like far panes
And turrets flashed by the sunset across huge plains.
I was about to leave the house for work,
And snatching one last glance at the morning news,
Fantastic as you now would think such news,
Hurled at our senses in curt tanks of type,
Read :

‘ ALTAMOUNT’S WAR ON BABIES . . . ALTAMOUNT’S
REVIVAL OF GERM WARFARE . . . ALTAMOUNT
SAVAGES NUNNERIES. . . .’ Closing the door,
I stepped into the sleety wilderness :
Upon the instant the whole human scene
Was vernal, blossomed, musical and safe.

What was I dreaming ? A great splash of snow
Half blinded me ; for sure, I was awake ;
But still this pure and warm and fragrant bliss
Inveigled me, and nothing but that would mean
A point that day. So, on the ride to town,
I longed to speak ; was slow ; another spoke,
Another, and another, and I found
There was not one who had not undergone
My initiation, escaping from nightmare and fear
And provoked phantom-murdering and discord shrill—
All tuned to a fine clear easy happy note.
And by the time we reached our offices,
The wonder grew,— though then it was at once
A wonder chiefly in its naturalness ;
For swift through Altamount the same had sung.

There was no actual call for armistice,
No promising but official test of feeling,
No peace proposal. From their wireless towers

Only the radiant calm we had now received
Was on the air. It scarcely needed words,
It was the world ; the insoluble dispute
And frightful duel had thus become as though
They had never been ; gentleness circled all
As an eternal, infallible element,
Unquestioned as the daystar or the lily —
And still I hear Korymbë's bells that day.

RAILWAY NOTE

THE station roofs curve off and line is lost
In white thick vapour. A smooth marble sun
Hangs there. It is the sun. An ermine frost
Edges each thorn and willow skeleton
Beyond the ghosts of goods-yard engines. Who
On earth will get the big expresses through ?
But these men do.
We ride incredulous at the use and eyes
That pierce this blankness : like a sword-fish flies
The train with other trains ahead, behind,
Signalled with detonation, whistle, shout ;
At the great junction stops.
Ticket-collectors board us and fling out
Their pleasantry as though
They liked things so,
Answering the talkative considerate kind,
' Not so bad now, but it's *been* bad you know.'

DEVELOPMENT

HAD this been three long lives ago,
Each Naiad, Dryad, Faun

Would have pleaded well against the blow,
And the axe had been withdrawn.

Those rural souls to-day are mute,
Or are busy enough elsewhere.
You may bring your engines and uproot
Their wood — you have time to spare.

You own it, legally bought and sold,
Elfin are out of date,
And better value, I shall be told,
Is a rose-pink housing estate

Where every man may possess five yards
Of grass and a cycle-shed,
Than a greenwood for idling birds and bards ;
Well, you win : the greenwood's dead.

TO OUR CATCHMENT BOARD

STARTLING all spirits, dreams, and secrets
Out of the woods that verged on my first river,
The engineers arrived, large friendly men
With much tobacco armed, and drainage schemes.
They had no special hate against my river,
And indeed loved it, as a henwife loves
Some fated fowl, ' Regardez, qu'elle est belle.'
With truck and shovel, chain and claw, horse-power
Obeyed the office ; hawthorns thought immortal
Found they were not, and oaks of kingliest antler
Left their old vantage over my first river.

Needs not to tell that flag and sedge and plantain
From humbler camp, but privileged, were sacked,
And snags that poked their snouts above the stream
In summer, trying to be crocodiles,
Were soon exposed ashore for what they were.
In mathematic channels, reinforced
With best cement (as far as means would run)
The river took his solitary way.
Catchment as catchment can, and I'll not say
The work was wrong.

For I have known my river
Since this brave century opened, and have noted
A certain permanence, a personality,
A liking almost for each opposition,
A willingness to make the best of things.
And now the foreman and his squad and tackle
Have moved a few miles on, and the wilful stream
Invents new rippling-places and underminings,
Long strands and sands ; by whose example moved
The willow-wood may gather, the full moon
Sow sacred oaks, and some new child in time
Find in their shadow forms of grace I found,
And by their dance and by the wavelets' chime
Be blest till sense in deeper floods be drowned.

A CHRONOMACHY
Or Let the Best Man Win

How is it with you, famous Time,
Are times not what they were ?
Are you as prompt with tick and chime
As in your younger year ?

I will be honest and confess
I never quite agreed
That you meant never more or less,
And were mere constant speed.

‘ Compare me to a centipede ? ’
The injured shade replied.
‘ But still, I’m strangely pedigreed,
And you may well deride.

I scarcely know what origin
Accounts for little me ;
Presumably the child of sin,
Old as geology.

I hear the sun is blamed for that,
And almanacks come out
Asserting he’s my autocrat
Who orders me about.

With B.C. here and A.D. there
I seem to have degrees
Unique and apt to fill with fear
The Universities.

Sometimes my relatives would note
My lean and hungry look,
And, generous thought ! provide a coat
Of arms — by hook or crook.

One thought a pair of wings would suit,
A scythe was also offered ;
An hour-glass in my claw was put —
I, being mortal, suffered.

Even in your pastimes you, young man,
Or not so young (beg pardon !)
Considered me a Caliban,
The nuisance in the garden.

Witness that effigy at Lord's,
Where cricket fans convene ;
Above the battle and the hordes,
Poor Father Time is seen

Removing still with horrid pride
The bails to close the play ;
And yet, with brown ale fortified
He'd watched the whole great day.

— In self-defence I beg to state
I have no measurements ;
I can be early, can be late,
Am pace, or somnolence.

Whatever evidence the trick
Of wrist-watch might pretend
In war's worst dawns, I was not slick,
I could not cheat a friend.

And ever since young Romeo
With Juliet was so close,
I tried to be their chance, or so ;
Well, am I so morose ?

' O lente, lente currite ' —
This Latin, got by chance

Is in my mind continually
When touching "that old dance."

But danger and death, death's clever face,
Make men see much in a flash
And love and nerve-fusion and embrace
Wouldn't see creation's crash.

From which it comes (and did I know
How to refute, I would),
That I am hated for being slow,
When rapidity would be good,

And for racing away when most desired
To dally and defer ;
I let that pass. But am I tired ?
But am I tired ? No, *Sir !* '

STROLLING PLAYERS

Tumult : Break forth, some crashing clashing fiery genius,
lead the way,
For the day has dawned and the gates flash open and this
is Chaos Day ;
Let every whipster, toper, pimp, tub-thumper announce
his claim
Against each other whipster, toper, pimp and so forth.
Shame !

Idleness : If only, O, if only I had — but why should a
man repine ?
That noise just now produced somehow a chord from
this soul of mine.

Well, I've a feeling that some clock struck and the
better people dine,
So call me early, Mother, — does anyone know the rest
of the line ?

Glory : Brilliant even in a winter dusk the sun on the
Denkmal flares,
The very spire in my impression wakens to life and dares
The war in the air with a bayonet bare, — and see now,
spring's afire ;
Never did I see such a sign for me as the glitter of yon
barbed wire.

Gasometer : How these tattlers still get away with it sadly
puzzles me ;
I don't mind a little wind but they are flatulent to a
degree ;
My business is with real gas, and as long as coke ain't
coal,
I'll prove by round good sense that I have an incan-
descent soul.

Torpedo : Here is, here is, here is, here is such a reserve
of style,
Such singleness of purpose, such freedom from gall and
bile,
Such energy in discipline, such altruism, such calm,
I hope all the rest of the gang will give me, how do
you say, the palm.

All : We are the masters, we go booming, mauling, loom-
ing, crawling ahead
Through the gelatinous world that nature, absent-
mindedly, seems to have bred ;

Any complaints may be made to the staff, but the
answer to any complaint is one,
Mother nature must more or less confess that we're
each of us her son.

THE HIPPODROME

THE HIPPODROME ! When I, a country child,
First dreamed the city's pleasures, this strange name
Excelled them all ; mysteriously it rang.

I heard, I hoped, — and one night winter-wild,
The cab to take us to the wonder came,
And suddenly I saw how windows hang

In carriages, and my sweet mother blessed
The journey over lonely roads and hills
Where north winds raved, at whose immense contest

Old Butler quivered not, but did his best,
And his horses did so too ; I watched these wills,
And doubted not which one would come off best.

And then the town, the life, the HIPPODROME,
The curious cushioned seats, the warmth of men,
The scene, and song, and dance, and comic fall

Against that lovely scene of pool and dome,
The jester who profaned that highland glen,
The juggler in the painted Tudor hall.

But glorious was the word for that night's form ;
The jokes still linger, and the brilliance burns.
I see my mother and my father there.

I fall asleep while Butler through the storm
Drives his sound horses, his grave bass returns
At home ; the HIPPODROME still claims a share

Of my conception, much as my tin bell
Hung in the highest plum-tree, which will call
Only to me, or those confabulate,

When tidal tempests whirlpool angry swell
And in their course excite this earthly ball,
By few recorded. I would beg to state —

The HIPPODROME ! I feel, after these years,
The splendour there, the challenge, though the fact
Was travesty ; who knows, will see that name

In vastness written, sunlit, meet for verse,
Devoted to immortal spur and act ;
I see, and for the child will take the blame.

THE SCIENTISTS

How shall this thing be done ?
How shall we make the lawless lightning run
In tracks compelled by us, its flame
Obedient grown to us and tame
As water played from marble Triton's gorge ?
What change should seize this passionate fire
And keep him here at our desire,
The courier of our will, the servant of our forge ?

Curious and maybe more
If we might gaze with an intenser eye

Into this star which burns and seems to try
To give us its strange lore.
There is the challenge, here are we aware
Of something in the air ;
And only one thing needed, but that one
May seem faint dream. How shall this thing be
done?

‘ I’ll put a girdle round about the world
In forty seconds.’ If you mean a chain
Of thought and news and sense, do not refrain ;
But fancy oiled and curled
Has entertained before. In earnest then
You mean to traverse weather fair or foul,
Speak, sing, play Shakespeare through the hemispheres,
Serene through distance and through tempest’s howl —
Bear London’s voice to Tokyo ? Gentlemen,
I will subscribe when your machine appears.

Professor, one small doubt
Here is a body, which this morning smiled
A beautiful and energetic child.
What is this wave of life, and whence welled out ?
Why, how so sharply vanished ? Will not you,
Having accomplished such a host of things
Which I repeated \times times could not do,
Come at this other secret ? Find the nerve,
Discern the essential curve,
And build the new power-station, the reserve ?
You know that easy dust which makes a gun
Immensely active —

‘ This too shall be done.’

AT MY WRITING TABLE

UNQUESTIONING I follow — follow whom ?
That sounds like questioning, and I have found
It makes no difference. Ghosts will shift their ground ;
Then either take their hint, or give them room.

That pond in sultry midnight just beyond
The last pale house of a township in Japan,
What can it mean to me or any man
Who once passed by it ? Still I feel that pond.

But fast as ether's waves the sense is swung
To midnight Argentine, and every light
And every bell-voiced cricket make that night
Necessity to me ; I move among

The radicals, the hot-heads at the den
Which ends the track ; and eyes I see, which pierce
Mine and myself with problem ; but transverse
The phantom has commanded me, and then

In the sour concrete hole the corporal shows
His muddy map, his Z Day zone of fire ;
' This is the end of every man's desire ' ;
Emerging there we see a winter rose

Of burning beauty on the hill ahead,
And fearful contours rush to that wild flame ;
We cower in storms of steel, the flower-show game
Is played on us ; up there they clear the dead.

At least this next arrangement kills less troops ;
Lead, stranger, up an undistinguished road,

Where moth corrupts, and devilries corrode,
And, in meiosis, ' lovely woman stoops ' —

So you have brought me to this midnight post
Where quiet reigns, and solitude writes books.
I yield ; I can no other ; habit looks
Stronger again. Adieu, return, my ghost !

SPRING AND CRITICISM

THE year gains fast ; the pear-tree's many buds
Crowd in the sunlight, and the swan has flown
On royal wing from pool to pool ; wild life
In thousands seizes its perennial chance.
Much moved by this performance and, I trust,
Though long distracted, sharing in the fact,
I catch my bus, and scamper to my job.
It seems a silly business, and the thought
Of each green energy displaying to
The sun (that may be missing) lovely growth
Daunts me a trifle, makes more difficult
The tendance of these academic needs,
Which by a stroke of the pen might be called off.
I talk of Wordsworth, and I think of weeds.
I think of weeds, and wish some weed would scoff,
Swarming on this rostrum, at this kind of seeds.
The world of plough, and brish-hook, and old Pan
Breaks through my stuff, and votes an x-year plan.

THE WINNERS

AT summer's close, beneath a blackening sky,
When nature seemed unbloomed perhaps for ever,

Dispirited at last in her endeavour,
We paused upon the bridge that, crook-backed high,
Crosses the slow canal : much in our mood
Was like the season. Once more glancing down
Into those waters which the multitude
Of pike-faced anglers drawn from the great town
Had probed and strained for months, we suddenly
saw

Dark giant fishes floating through their pool,
Masters of life whom no false charm could draw,
Proceeding as they pleased, sure of their rule.—
The revelation in that bleak decline
Spoke like a trumpet, made the whole day shine.

LET JOE DO IT

IN the sharpness of need, the mind
Is commendably nimble ; this dark recluse
Having hoarded much knows where to find
Unexpected gear, and turn to use,
Perhaps piecemeal, more often combined.
The glowing moment gone, the deed
Is forgotten ; and now for the next swift need !
This curious accomplishment paints itself
In simile in some village forge
Where Joe or George
Has cluttered up each bench and shelf
With every contraption from jack to jar ;
No one could know where they all are.
But he was born beneath some star
That points, when necessity grows extreme,
With clear intelligible sure beam

To the very thing, this hook, that swivel
To outwit the meddlings of the Devil.
I hardly know which I most admire,
The brilliant wit or politician,
Suddenly seizing the great position,
Or Joe, whose main, whose only ambition
Is to be on hand when people require.

JIM'S MISTAKE

LEANING against the barrow which displayed
His none too prepossessing stock in trade
(Sometimes mechanically receiving pence
From those who pounced some backless novel thence),
Jim asked a friend fresh from the wild of Kent
How he would say this year's hop-picking went,
And was it true they'd got some new machine
To pick the hops. Not met it? Jim had seen
Accounts of it, and though some years had passed
Since he had helped to throw a poke up last,
It worried him to think of this machine,
' 'Course it won't answer. How's the thing to clean
The leaves and rubbish? Bound to be a frost,
Not to say nothing of initial cost.
Well, anyway let's hope it won't catch on.
Someone was saying Mr. Levitt's gone,
And Champion's farm not shown an hop this year.
Times I remember! AND some drops of beer.
The GUDGEON, now you're talking — them was nights!
I'll slip down Sunday, my old pal's at White's.'
But trade was slack. Jim stepped into the breach.
' All hops — O no, all books one penny each.'

' AGE 200 '

At an Old Comrades' Dinner

' JUMP to it,' roared a thunderous voice ; ' Fall in,' another bawled ;

' Take his name,' a third barked out, and I was duly hauled

Before the most enraged C.O. who ever yet appeared.

' H'm, Pumpkin, what have you to say ? Parading with a beard ? '

' A beard ? I crave your pardon, sir, but if I might make bold,

This hairy frieze is natural to the very very old.'

' Old ! what's your age ? ' ' With deference, sir, I can't precisely say ;

It must be quite a hundred, rather two, if it's a day.'

' Come, come — the man has lost his wits. A hundred ? '

' Colonel, yes ;

I venture, with respect, to state this is no idle guess.

Do not, dear sir, be petrified by what I now advance : — You formerly commanded us in the mud of North-East France.'

' God bless me, so I did. Of course. It all comes back. Say on.'

' O how your troops could dubbin boots, how every buckle shone !

And, if I'm right, each Sunday night we scrambled through the mud

Of various parts of Belgium athirst for Teuton blood.

‘ I can’t recall quite when that was, but I am almost
sure

That this was in the period which they used to call The
War.

For other points occur to me, there was one special
trick

Of scratching holes and — trenches, yes — with shovel
and with pick.

‘ And things kept dropping here and there, which tended
to explode,

And rum was issued, but this rum might loiter on the
road.’

‘ Gadzooks,’ the Colonel answered. ‘ Case dismissed !
The rascal’s right.

We must all be quite two hundred. Well, we’ll celebrate
to-night.’

SERIOUS CALL

From a Neglected Bookcase

WHAT is this tyrant fate which dragged me here
And here detains me ? Year on doleful year
I stand uncalled-for, Pepys, whose heartiest prayer
Would be to stroll abroad and take the air ;
Like Milton’s chanticleer, ‘ with lively din ’
Scatter the pride of human ‘ darkness thin.’
O for an hour or two to entertain
New hearts with tales of Knipp and Castlemaine !
But here I stick. My neighbours in the case
Are worthy gentlemen, but hardly a face
That I remember, or could dote on, shows
Among these uncommunicative rows.

I have heard Sermons, but as friendly chat
They hardly work : tough Tillotson falls flat ;
Science has charmed me much, but who could dance
With Newton's ' Opticks ' as his sole romance ?
Flanked with huge Histories of Roman Wars,
It needs some courage, but I call them bores.
I get no kind smile from old Humdrum's Turks,
No wink from Eloquence — Bossuet's or Burke's,
No hope from Doddridge's or Hooker's Works.
I gathered one rare morning long ago
That one Lord Byron lived seven shelves below,
A poet with a past, amorous and witty.
The distance spoils all chance of a Committee.
Rabelais' laugh from just as far I hear,
Ghostly enough, poor man, and Gibbon's sneer
Makes dim connection with my starving sense,
Consigned like me to pious impotence.
The latest cheerful spirit stowed away
In this sarcophagus of youth and May
Bore the name Pickwick, if I heard it right,
A fattish man of means, here doomed to hungry
night.

As in my rural walk I've seen some wall
Hung with remains of bird and animal,
Pranksome or placid, tame or fierce, alike
From stoat to hedgehog nailed, from lark to shrike,
So here we languish ; mark us, ye who come
(If any come) in bowshot of our tomb,
Ye volumes new, of scandal full or piety,
Ye gilded idols of the B—k S—c—ty ;
Oh, meditate the dreary shrine where Pepys
Next Coke, Watts, Fénelon whole ages sleeps.

FREDDY FLAIL PROVES HIS POINT

An East Anglian Tale

'THEY'RE funny things, wild animals,' said Flail,
Safe in the Seven Stars, while the wet gale
Went mouthing past and trying to upset
Whatever in the village lingered yet
Of ancient fabrics ; there, it howled again,
A wilderness a-crying, a long strain
Of tameless, homeless force. Old Flail at last,
When this aerial agony was past,
Repeated his opinion, and to that
Added enigma : ' I'll eat my owd hat
If that weren't wolf and not just winter wind.'
' If that was wolf, we'd b. soon have he skinned,'
Young Budgell answered. ' Well, they're funny things,'
Flail started out. ' Some wolves are wearing wings.
How do I make that out ? *I dain't*. There's one
That hev his place where good King Edmund's gone.
There was a rhyme, but I can't now recall,
Which had this wolf the centre of it all,
And so I'll tell you. Edmund, King or Saint,
Which name you please or both, both on 'em paint
The character, a thousand years ago
Called up his folk to face the Danish foe,
And stood nigh Thetford, and the war was on.
He could have held them ; that's where Anglia shone.
But think what numbers, young and old, lay dead
After the fight ; King Edmund bowed his head
Among his gentry, and no doubt too tender
Cried, *This must end : even end in our surrender*.
Yet not a tiny fear for his own case
Touched him ; the Danes would make defeat disgrace.

He spurned their terms. *Your vassal ? Share our land ?
You speak a language I don't understand.*

—*Why then we'll teach you.* To a withered tree
The Danes have tied him, arrows three times three
Whizz into his poor flesh and insults worse
Into his soul, if they could so far pierce
His Christian armour. Edmund now being dead,
To make all sure they soon chop off his head,
And one, who might have bombed civilians now,
Stares ape-like at that godlike bloodstained brow,
And hurls it into an old tangled copse.

These Danes retire, and Edmund's gathering troops
Come looking for his body, which they take,
But find no more, though every drift and brake
Is searched. And now, to cut my story short,
The wonder of a wolf shall come to court.

While they were prying, trying every clue,
One party cried to t'other *Where are you ?*

Where are you ? And there comes their master's clear
But small and far-off answer, *Here, here, here ;*

And so he cries, and so they hunt in haste,
And towards that voice they muddle through the waste.

And, who could dream it ? an old wolf to meet,
Holding the master's head in his forefeet,

With as much grace as you or I could show
Offering it to their hand. They take, and go

Where still his body bleeds ; the severed head
Unites, and beautiful lies Edmund dead ;

And the gaunt wolf as quiet as a child

Watches them all. Unhunted, unreviled

He stays about the place while monk and nun

Prepare the burial ; when he sees all done,

Back to his woods he peaceably retreats,
And surely tells his story to his mates ;
Which Wolf I reckon makes one think a bit,
And if I knew that rhyme I'd give you it.'

VILLAGE SONG

HAROLD was as straight a youth
As you would meet in a lifetime,
And his Miranda was as straight as he.
You'll say my song is silly sooth,
But it's lasted me a lifetime ;
I think for a song they well may count on me.

Harold was as sound a mind
As ever had my old dad's schooling,
And she was ever wordless, thoughtful, wise ;
He for a bailiff was designed
And 's father reckoned schooling
A necessary modern compromise.

Years have vanished since I met
Miranda with her lover ;
I sometimes go where once they courted well ;
I hear they flourish, they beget,
And he's still her constant lover ;
Their window looks on a stream runs down a dell.

Much in early years did I
Perceive his strength, her beauty,
And childishly forecast their glowing prime.
Much I loved her brook-blue eye,
And her cherry-orchard beauty.
Their union governs one through a doubtful time.

IN CHILDHOOD

I'LL take a journey out of our old house.
It cannot be a long one ; in those days
The parish bounds were wide enough for me.
But, on a journey, observation pays.
An empire pulses in a hollow tree
If you will share with mite and moth and mouse.
If you will hear our gate click, smell the dust
Just settling after Mercer's van has gone,
And spy the apple I intend to steal
From Shorter's plat, why then you may come on.
Then, this stag-beetle's hurry, and this silk wheel
The yellow spider has wrought, at once reveal
Our census. But my thoughts are troubled now,
For she, so far above me, passes by,
Unconscious of her magic and my vow,
Which lift all local journeys through a moonlight sky.

THE HURRYING BROOK

WITH half a hundred sudden loops and coils
Between the limits of two humble farms,
Swerving and dodging like a boy who foils
His mates' pursuit ; with numberless wild charms ;
With beauty and joy my tiny river dances
The longest way he can, and prettiest too,
About our meadows, topped with shining lances
Of reed and rush, tunnelled in shadowy blue
Of thicket oak and alder and ivied shell
Of vast old willow ; fast he runs and well
To keep his many appointments all at once,
Now the eel-stone, now the yellow lily, now the white,

Now where the fat vole on the clay ledge suns,
Here there and everywhere, a brilliant watersprite.

HORSE AND COWS

THE old horse, clay-stained, comes to talk
With strangers on their walk ;
He stoops a haltered head to graze,
Then lifts his gaze
And asks to be caressed and liked,
It's dismal feeding in this diked
November swamp-land, tedious land,
And you've a warm, a quiet hand ;
Between his wish for grass and stroking
He's somewhat puzzled — maybe joking ;
Not so the herd of junior cows
Who just beyond the lean hedge browse ;
They stand with serious, steady eye ;
No wooing does, they won't come nigh,
Their silken whiteness glistens even
Beneath that cloud like unforgiven
Monstrousness : they watch and stare,
Convinced such folks are not quite square.

AFTER ANY OCCASION

SEE what lovely hours you lost
While with a half-triumphant mind you crost
Lath-swords of words on some uncertain matter,
With dizzy-brilliant haste, with pompous thump and
clatter,
In spite of which the rest enjoyed their private chatter !

Think what quiet might have done,
What simple watching would have won
Of human portraiture ; how noble and how young
That profile of an ancient, keen as the line of hills
Beyond those sunset windows ; hear how his silence fills
The hearts of those about him, hear, and hold your
tongue.

Mark you too, how youth with bold emphatic error
pleased

At one stroke seized
This company ; the willow-leaves on the tip of the tree
no clearer

Meet the sky.

I loved him for his scorn of the work that makes glad
error die,

And how he lit the moment with his loyalty to a lie !

So much the dearer.

But ' store of ladies, whose bright eyes

Rain influence ' all about you rise,

Whose crisped hair, whose brows of calm, whose musical
perfection might

Detain amazement for a thousand nights and one more
night.

But all are flown, and all are flown,
And you may now grow wise alone.

A PASTORAL TO MADELINE

IN sunbright years
When, spite of Dr. Johnson on the way,
Shepherds would play
On artful pipes and sing some roundelay

To her who charmed that countryside,
How I had tried the music to express
 Madeline's comeliness,
Bright-tressed, ready-smiling, April-eyed.
But now the shadows and north-easters strike
Along the vallies ; kite and hawk and shrike
Are all our nightingaledom ; shepherds stand
And with barbed wire and concrete mete the land,
So flageolets are silent ; yet shall she,
 ' My sprightly neighbour,' have not a song from
 me ?
I will forgive her though she sticks
 To Madelinian politics,
And though she threaten me, grown quite a sheep,
With future lecture-tickets on that theme,
 Still, round the doorway I might peep,
And love her for her earnest dream
Of betterment and liberal flocks and herds
 Happy as birds :
In my mind's eye, how fair her name appears
 In sunbright years !

VICTORIANS

THINK not too glibly of their soft escape,
For if you do, the escapists you condemn
Will be yourselves ; read first, and fully shape
The diagram of life which governed them.
I grant, these tall French windows, these smooth lawns,
These monuments announce their quiet years ;
But who shall say what pale and anxious dawns
Smote these ? Be certain ere you risk your sneers.

And of your charity admit that man
Need not for ever live in sharp distress ;
Admit, that you as often as you can
Prefer to dance with happy thoughtlessness ;
Devise some creed, and live it, beyond theirs,
Or I shall think you but their spendthrift heirs.

TO THE EARL OF SURREY

[*' At £160 Mr. Edward Smith bought a 1585 edition of the " Songs and Sonettes " composed by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, in 1537, when he was in confinement at Windsor Castle for having struck a fellow poetaster at Hampton Court. This was a late edition of a Tudor " best-seller." ' — Morning Paper, July 5th, 1938.*]

ILLUSTRIOUS poetaster, courteous lord
Of large estates, and (not the least) of verse,
We reckon you as nothing in the horde
Of clamorous bards, except that a long purse
Is still required to buy your cobwebbed book.
Sometimes a pallid student too may strive
To count your accents — some make four, some five
Per line, and annotate : ' Surrey mistook. . . '

My noble, valiant, eloquent Englishman,
Wyatt's comparable friend, fierce-beautiful,
See we are fallen on days which you not guessed,
Who led our language and our interest
Up shining ways, which should all Europe school, —
' Leaving great verse unto a little clan.'

IN MEMORIAM, A. R.-I.

Yokohama, November 1938

DELAY not ; for the years advance
With terrible though smooth rapidity :

Chance it seems still follows chance,
But that's a passport lacks validity ;
Still the day brings funeral news,
And though to die may be to live
People hold opposing views,
And some draw water in a sieve.
Then ' use your time.'

After this (I shall not now
Defy the picture of futurity)
We may win the mountain's brow
And everlasting bright security ;
Still the day's news speaks of death,
And some for all I know have gone
Beyond the world of brain and breath
And, as the hymn saith, ' all unknown
Their future ' time.

I for one am prone to take
The fact of death as far from final ;
Would one's Maker stoop to break
The course of hope and undesign all ?
Still I have this present case,
Another man I prized is dead,
And I at least can never trace
The ways we thought would lie ahead
' Some other time.'

I JUST NOTICED . . .

PASSING ; exposed to a strange new hour —
Yet every hour is new.

How did you dream that this gray tower
Stood where it used to do ?

It must have been my wish that kept
The stone so long the same ;
And certainly I felt time slept
Here, since first I came.

As hard it is to catch the signs
Of weather, vermin, mould,
As in one's glass to know the lines
That sternly prove one old.

The signs were there, the mortal law
Ran written on the gate ;
But not till sudden now I saw
That savage ' Out of Date.'

A NOT UNUSUAL CASE

It may be so : their love was never fire,
Never ' a wonder and a wild desire,'

What brought them first together ?

What ' come hither ' ?

And what does that concern us now, or them ?
Now, though life's whole vast various multitude
Were at their choice, and Venus wildly wooed
With every stratagem,

I still conclude

They would not alter much, nor dally far.
They, happiest in not following some queer star,
On usual roads, by frequent course, combined,
Are one, they mean one ; them no tragic find,

Caprice, inversion, egotism shall break.
They are as children at the same good table,
Whom wisdom plenishes ; whether bread or cake,
It is their common lot ; not all are able
To count on daily sustenance ; and this
Regular through long years is better bliss
Than chancing kickshaws. So, I guess, they live.
I wonder when it happened, their last kiss ;
But maybe more than any kiss can give
Dwells in their composition : smile who will,
They thread the maze that baffles beauty still.

TO A FRIEND

I KNEW your power, I thought, and I was wrong :
Perhaps you too will wonder : hear, and blame not.
Weary as could be, after strenuous long
Labourings, I lay down last night : sleep came not.
But you afar were in the room : you stormed
My waking sense and would not let me go,
And not like dreams nor phantoms nor half-formed
Pictures of memory was this conquering you :
But as yourself, in noontide colour clear,
And gaze and gaze I must, and you still gazed
Intensely kind ; ever and again I'd hear
The hour strike, but you stayed. So sweetly amazed
At length I fell asleep : and still you held
This being with your presence ; day dim breaking
Aroused me, but the charm was not dispelled,
And you were there, I knew, upon my waking,
Nor till some hours of this new painful day
Did I perceive your haunting fade away.

A CHANGE

How lovely it was, when all that came my way
Came an experience ; when the strong weak world
Just came my way.

— Now there must be, behind these contrary forms,
Dominant idea ; purpose and planned theme.
Who wrote that play ?

And what was that play's meaning ? — Taken so,
I turned my gaze, and fathomed hard. — And now,
What comes my way ?

THE SUM OF ALL

So rise, enchanting haunting faithful
Music of life recalled and now revealing
Unity ; now discerned beyond
Fear, obscureness, casualty,
Exhaustion, shame and wreck,
As what was best,
As what was deeply well designed.
So rise, as a clear hill road with steady ascension,
Issuing from drifted outskirts, huddled houses,
Casual inns where guests may enter and wait
Many a moment till the hostess find them ;
Thence ever before the carter, passing the quarries,
The griffin-headed gateways,
Windmill, splashing rill, derelict sheepfold,
Tower of a thousand years —
Through the pinewoods,
Where warm stones lodge the rose-leaf butterfly ;

Crossing the artillery ranges whose fierce signs
Mean nothing now, whose gougings look like
Bird-baths now ; and last, the frontier farm
And guard-house made of bracken.
Rising to this old eyrie, quietly forsaken,
You bear me on, and not me only.
All difference sheds away,
All shrivelling of the sense, anxious prolepsis,
Injury, staring suspicion,
Fades into pure and wise advance.
So rise ; so let me pass.

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Poems.

**AMAR SINGH
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